SUFFOLK TALES & OTHER STORIES

FAIRY LEGENDS

POEMS

MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES

BY THE LATE

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W. B. G.

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Suffolk Tales

ALTHOUGH the following stories are, of course, fiction, my Suffolk friends will no doubt be able to trace the descriptions of scenery in the neighbourhood of Grundisburgh, the 'Suffolk Village.' The story entitled 'A Sordid Philosophy' was suggested by a very lonely house on the road to Hollesley Bay. 'The Mantons' are meadows in Grundisburgh. 'Old Harry South' is a Mildenhall legend, and the scene lies between that town and Bury. Woodbridge is described in 'A Homely Tragedy.'

W. B. G.

FROM A SUFFOLK VILLAGE

I WALKED down the village street to-day. The red roofs of the irregular, clustering houses, the brick tower of the church, the thick yew and the sluggish stream were touched and transfigured by the level light of the sun that was sinking in a clear orange glow. The trees stood out against the mellow radiance as black as in the heart of winter, although now, in February, the rising sap is giving warm tints to the leafless boughs—purple to the beeches, deep red to the limes, and pinkish grey to the oaks. Everywhere there are those subtle signs of the turn and change in the year which are imperceptible to a townsman, but very definite to those who, like myself, live *tête-à-tête* with the weather. The colour is day by day coming back to the slopes of faded winter grass ; there are little orange balls of blossom on the yews, and tiny crimson dots on the hazel boughs, from which the mealy catkins hang. Little birds fly in pairs in the hedge-rows, where, until only a fortnight or so ago, they consorted in great flocks. Wood-pigeons coo serenely in the beeches, and the larks sing above the uplands.

In the village, people are beginning to recover from the influenza. They have passed the sick stage and the feverish stage, and now are very weak and woebegone. In a little side lane that leads to a pasture, which a little later in the year will be all aflame with marsh marigolds, live the old couple I went to visit. The tiny garden in front where the aconites are pushing up through the mould—little yellow heads with a frill round each like Toby's ruff—is decorated

with a pattern of sea-shells, and the battered figure-head of a ship, that recalls the presence of the salt estuary only four miles away, where vessels come up with the fresh-smelling tide. The two old people were sitting dully over their fire. They were glad of a visitor. Mrs. Flowde, an old lady with the inquiring glance of a magpie, and the taste in dress of a parroquet, expounded to me her views on infection.

'God will send this complaint to everyone that shun them that is ill with it,' she said.

I hinted that this was not the usually received opinion, but she was firm.

'He have spared you and yours,' she went on severely, 'because you have visited the sick—and you ought to be thankful.'

She intimated darkly that Mrs. Villiers (one of the ladies in our village) was doomed, as she had not been to see her, 'and,' she said, cheerfully, 'it will go very hard with her, as she have the asthma so bad. . . . This complaint isn't shut up in a room. It is in the air—and them it's sent to is bound to have it, and no doctor can save them from it.'

She then gave me a very minute account of her illness, not sparing me a single harrowing detail.

'There were one thing,' she acknowledged, 'that I did miss, and that were spots. I were as gay as a leopard when I had the scarlet fever some years back, but none come this time.'

Her old husband, whose face is like the full moon and is always decorated with a cheerful grin, had experiences of his own to impart. He suffers as a general rule from the rheumatics and the 'browntitus'—both of which, as his wife parenthetically remarks, are 'hypocrite complaints'—but now these have given place to other and (I hope) rarer symptoms. Yesterday, among other things, he 'fared to have a sinking feeling' in the very centre of his stomach. He wished to have some rich beef-tea and get it to stick there, just in that one spot. I had brought him the rich beef-tea, but, alas! could not provide any mechanism to-

wards getting it to stick ; which disappointed Mr. Flowde, whose faith in the powers of medical science is unbounded.

The little living-room is comfortably furnished ; there is an upright eight-day clock 'with a beautiful strike,' and a handsome corner cupboard, in which treasures of sprigged cups and plates are immured. On the mantelpiece are two photographs. One is of the old couple's son, standing with his legs crossed so as to make a kind of pattern with them, and a rustic table beside him. The other is of their grandchild, a creature with corkscrew ringlets and a swollen face. But these represent all the love and romance that has ever brightened the sluggish monotony of the old people's lives. About these they weave many brilliant imaginations and dream many beautiful dreams. They form the one link that binds them to the great world of London, the turmoil and thunder of which does not yet reach these quiet pastures seventy miles away. But the old Flowdes have given a precious pledge, in the shape of their son, to all-devouring London, and feel that they have a part in the stir and life of the great city which they have never seen, and speak of somewhat as the people in fairy stories speak of the Palace of the Ogre. There is no life so poor and mean but the golden thread of imagination runs somewhere through it, and these old people have their full share of the shining web. Their life has been a hard one. Mr. Flowde invested his little savings in a friendly society, which broke. The manager, as Mr. Flowde explains, with unconscious irony, took the money 'to make a gentleman of himself.' So the old people must still work for their living. Mr. Flowde is a jobbing gardener ; or, rather, I should say, on the strength of having been once at some remote period spademan at the Hall gardens, he feels himself qualified to dig your borders and slice your flower-roots as remorselessly as any man alive. He also scratches and rolls your gravel to very slow music, and will spread what he admiringly calls 'the best o' muck' upon the roots of your rose-trees.

It was dusk when I left the cottage ; the symptoms took

so long to describe, and there was a letter to be read 'that come yesterday morn' from the son in London. The school-children were still busy 'catching their deaths' in the stream, carrying out Locke's precept that children should always be wet-shod with as much precision as though they were his disciples. Every now and again some mother would fetch in a band of them, with shrill denunciations, helping along some reluctant little boy by the hair of his head. The wind had dropped and the country seemed very still. Here and there were a few labourers coming home in silence across the fields, with their tools and their dinner-baskets on their backs. The shepherd in his brown smock was preparing for his night's work in the sheltered lambing-pen, where his little hut like a bathing-machine was standing. Over everything the quiet night was falling, wrapping the distant line of woods and the brown fields and the village in a cloudy darkness that seemed as soft and as vague as sleep.

THE CLEAN COTTAGE

THIS is a little sordid story that was told me in the cottages. Like many sordid things, it is very human, and, therefore, has a pathetic side.

There is a cottage that stands by itself in the little narrow valley that is called here the Gull. Its official approach is by a lane, which in winter is a long pool of liquid mud, and your best way to it lies along the foot-path, through the low-lying meadows, that brings you to the plank thrown across the stream, close to which the red-roofed cottage stands. The river—we call any gutter that flows a river in Suffolk—is all the summer a mere languid dribble of dirty water between deep banks fringed with purple-stemmed alders ; but in winter it is often a brimming, yellow flood. In all seasons of the year it flows on through the village green below, and into it are cast slops, and old boots, and cabbage stalks, and out of it is drawn the drinking-water for all the cottages near.

The moist green meadows are beautiful in spring and summer, starred with marsh marigold and cowslips and lady's smocks ; and then, again, through the wonderful serene East Anglian autumn, with yellow fleabane and with pale mauve crocus—*Colchicum autumnale*—that opens delicate cups to the sun. Above the meadows, on the slope of the hills that rise on either side, are fields that, to a discerning eye, are quite as beautiful as the pastures. During one part of the year they are stretches of warm brown earth, and then, later on, they become a sweep of rustling corn ; or a

bean-field, giving out gusts of subtly sweet odours when the sun shines ; or serried ranks of glaucous-leaved swedes, that take tender shades of salmon and apricot at the fall of the year, and have the fresh ripe smell that is dear to an eastern county heart. To the south of the Gull is a 'squeech,' or little grove, that harbours birds innumerable, and the valley is always alive with the little restless creatures. In April and May the nightingales sing round the cottage all through the magic spring nights, when the stabbing east wind has dropped, and the air is sweet with the hawthorn and the almond scent of the blossoming apple and pear trees, and the smell of the plumed lilacs and the wallflowers in the little garden.

But the glory of the cottage (which is a poor dilapidated place) does not consist in such things as these. In the scrupulously clean living-room there is mahogany and horse-hair furniture, brought to such a state of shining polish that it strikes the beholder with awe and admiration. Amos Copping was a lad of seventeen when he married his first wife, Alice, who was a servant at the rectory. Work was slack, and Amos enlisted in a regiment that was ordered out to the Crimea. He behaved himself so well that after the war he was, to quote his old mother, who told me the story, 'promoted to ride a-hoss-back, and to go to Cork.' Meanwhile Alice had returned to service, and during the time that husband and wife were parted she had earned money to buy a little furniture. She must have denied herself many things, for when he joined her she had saved every penny of her wages, and bit by bit the precious household goods were bought. He left the army when his time was up, and they settled in the cottage in the Gull. Alice was as 'house-proud' as only eastern county women can be ; exquisitely clean, slaving for her furniture, bestowing a world of loving care upon the poor ugly things, putting her life, as it were, into the polishing and furbishing of the little rooms. No children came to disturb the spotless neatness of the chairs, shrouded in elegant crochet antimacassars of her own making ;

no dirty little boots clambered impiously on the sacred sofa ; no little sticky claws clutched at the china dogs sitting in state on the mantelshelf ; no cunning little arms slipped themselves round her neck, drawing her heart away from the furniture.

In middle life Alice sickened of an internal complaint that the doctor said was incurable. We of the richer classes know how terrible is such an illness, without hope, although we can obtain a hundred alleviations and contrivances to dull the pain. But among the poor it must be faced in all its naked horror. There in the low, mean, upstair chamber, noisome with the smell of the disease, Alice lay for weeks uncomplaining, with that patience that belongs only to the poor and to the saints. Her one cry to her husband was, 'Don't let your house go down, Amos, don't let your house go down !' When she was dying she made him promise to marry, exactly one month after her death, a friend of hers who would be careful of the beloved furniture. She sent for this woman, and told her what her wishes were. 'Folks used to say I had a secret way of polishing my furniture—it fared to look like gold,' the dying woman said with a feeble smile. 'I never told anyone what I used, Jenny, but now I'll tell you. Promise me to use it when I'm gone, and you marry Amos.'

And then she imparted her cherished recipe. Jenny kissed the poor damp face, and gave her promise, and Alice died. A month after Jenny married Amos, and the furniture is now as reverently cared for as of old.

SOME OLD LOVE-STORIES

YESTERDAY I was turning over an old book of extracts, and I came upon the words written by Crabbe on the scrap of paper that wrapped the wedding ring of his dead wife.

> 'The ring so worn as you behold,
> So thin, so pale, is yet of gold:
> The passion such it was to prove;
> Worn with life's cares love yet was love.'

With these homely, touching words in my mind I walked across the grassy slopes where the bleating lambs were playing round the trunks of the limes and pollard oaks, or were cuddled up against the ewes, lying luxuriously to the leeward of the comfortable motherly fleeces. Some of the little creatures were stretched at full length, like dead things on the soft spring turf, sleeping the deep restorative sleep which is only given to young things, when the life or spirit—call it what you will—seems to go a great way off, back into the limbo whence it came. There was a funeral in the village, and the bell was tolling. The keen north-east wind brought the sound clearly to me. It was for an old man who had lost his wife about three weeks ago. She was a very cross old woman whose virtues were a scourge to her family. I never knew anything so terrible as her cleanliness; it made me sympathise secretly with dirt. I never passed her door without hearing her scolding the old man for some imaginary speck of mud his poor trembling old feet had brought into the house. He used to shuffle

along on one leg and two sticks, with a penitent smile on his weather-beaten face. But her death broke the old man's heart. Perhaps it was the scolding that he missed. He said very little, but sat over the fire, while every now and again a great involuntary tear rolled down his wrinkled cheeks. Each day he went to bed an hour earlier, until there came a day when the hour of his going to bed touched his hour for getting up; and that day he died.

I reached the sheltered hedgerow where sweet violets and a hundred other delicate and beautiful little things are pushing cautiously out of the earth—fringed pig-nut, celandine leaves spotted like a snake's back, red dead nettle, and the arrow-shaped leaves of lords-and-ladies. Mr. Grout's house, to which I was going, is a low, red-tiled cottage, not much bigger than a shed. His little garden plot was radiant with crocus of all shades and colours; the sun was shining full upon them, and every cup was open. Mr. Grout's kitten was tapping them gently with his paw to drive the bees out of them, and then making springs at the angry insects that came up flurried, like people on whom a practical joke has been played. I once asked Mr. Grout what his kitten's name was, and he answered, after a moment's meditation: 'I call him Tom, when I don't call him Charley.' Mr. Grout was sitting yesterday afternoon by the smouldering fire with his well-thumbed brown Bible on his knees. He was spelling out the words aloud. 'Me and my old Book, we do enjoy ourselves together!' he said. Mr. Grout is 'on his eighty-two,' and bent quite double; but he still can do 'a hand's turn,' and earns a few pence. On Sunday he is reckless in the matter of pomatum; I sit behind him in church, and know that he scents the air for pews round.

His mind yesterday was running on old days, and on his dead wife. Perhaps the slow deep-mouthed bell set him thinking of her and of the son he had lost.

'I've six daughters living—for what I know,' he said. 'There be three on them married up in London, but I don't know but what they're all alive. My poor dear boy

I lost of the fever thirty years ago. They were obliged to get the great straps that they use to lower the coffins with to strap him into his bed; and he and his sister Louie, who was ill too, shruck out like great dawgs. . . . Ah! my poor dear wife, she were a kind creature—a poor, hard-working creature as ever walked this earth. She has been gone thirteen year. That's her picture. When she go up to London to see one of her married daughters she had it took, and she give it to me, and she say, "My dear," she say, "if ever I am took, and you can see my face no more, you can look on it there," she say. "All right, my dear," I say. . . . Ah! she went quite sudden. I had been a-working for Mr. Villiers, and I come home in the evening. "My dear," she say, "I haven't got your tea, for I don't fare to be very well." "All right, my dear," I say; "I have got a job to do in the garden, and I will go and do that first." But when I got to the garden, all at once there come across me a feeling—a very cu'ious kind of feeling,' Mr. Grout went on impressively, 'that I'd best go and get my tea. My wife had gone upstairs and lay on the bed. I took her up a cup of tea and three slices of bread and butter. And she say, "Didn't I hear you say you had a sausage?" "Yes, my dear," I say; and I went down and cooked her three. "How will you have them done?" I say. "Oh, I don't care!" she say, and she spoke it so rash. She eat the three sausages and the three slices, and she drink the tea. "Now," she say, "I fare not to want anything more in this world." And she didn't, poor dear. She lay there and died very soon after. She were a good wife and a tender mother.'

Beyond Mr. Grout's house is a pasture where a herd of red Suffolk cattle graze—thick-set, hornless beasts with dewy eyes and mild faces; and a narrow lane parts this meadow from a great bare field where the March wind has scorched and shrivelled the young blades of wheat. A gaunt windmill stands on the brow of the hill against the sky-line, and below it is a cluster of cottages. In one of these a very old

man is lying bed-ridden and in second childhood. His daughter goes out stone-picking, but a friendly neighbour next door looks in from time to time. The poor old man thinks she is the wife come back again, whom he lost forty years ago. 'She is a stout person, like poor mother was,' explains the daughter. He cannot even remember her name, so vacant and blurred is his mind, but all his cry is for 'Dear' to come and sit by him. There are times when we think he suffers pain, and then he cannot go to sleep unless he holds 'Dear's' hand in his; the touch seems to soothe and comfort him. There was some very nasty physic that the parish doctor ordered for him, and he would not drink it unless 'Dear' poured it out and gave it to him.

These are only little grotesque stories, but the love that animates them is, after all, that same divine, transfiguring love, deathless, invincible, of which the beautiful romances are made. Not all the sordid monotony, not all the jars and rubs of the slow years, nor even the long absence, could quench it:

'Worn by life's cares, love yet was love.'

'THE PRAISE O' MATERIMONY'

THERE was a flower-show at Ash Soham, and the Squire had lent his grounds for the occasion. The house, a homely Georgian building in red brick, tempered to beautiful mellow tints by time and weather, faced due south. A magnolia in bloom by the side of the door filled the air with the penetrating lemon scent of its great white cups. The lawn was made beautiful by dignified cedars, and beyond them a sunny border was bright with China roses, tall white lilies and spikes of blue delphinium, with a thick yew edge for a background. The village people moved about reverently among the flower-beds, as well-behaved, indeed, as, according to my experience, country-folk always are on such occasions. The sun was sinking in a tender blue sky; the labourers had finished work, and were pouring into the show. All the people were in their best clothes; the babies were dressed in great magnificence, like monkeys off a barrel-organ. The stuffy canvas tent was crowded by prize-winners and their families, standing admiringly before their own exhibits in the square fashion that is common to people who are used to plenty of space. One poor woman whom I met at the door of the tent was furtively wiping her eyes. Neither her peas, nor her pot-plant, nor even her nosegay, had won a prize. A blind woman was being led round the show, wearing the curiously serene smile of inner content that belongs to sightless people.

Presently a bell rang. It was the signal for the giving away of the prizes by the Squire's newly married wife. It

was her first public appearance at Ash Soham, and it was in her honour that the flower-show took place so early—in the interval between haysel and harvest, instead of after harvest. We gathered round the Hall steps, where the ceremony was to take place and whence speeches were to be made. The bailiff, or steward as they call him in Suffolk, was busy marshalling the people. He was a stranger, who had only lately come there ; I did not know his name. There was no appreciable difference between his accent and that of the village folk, except that he omitted his 'h's,' which proved him to be no Suffolk man. He was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow of thirty or more, with a face like a ruddy apple, and a broad, good-humoured smile.

Presently someone near me spoke my name. The bailiff turned suddenly to me, and, his face lit up with pleasure, addressed me in the pure Devonshire vernacular, with that beautiful soft 'u' that cannot be rendered by any printed letter. It appeared that he had come originally from Hartworthy, and knew my name and people. He forgot everything for the moment in the joy of seeing a fellow-countrywoman. And for myself, the sound of the dear familiar speech brought back the round hills with their steep slopes clothed by larch plantations or by oak coppice, the rapid, brawling river, and the narrow green valley that I had once called 'home'—all steeped in that soft, rich, moist air that gives landscape and distance the vagueness and unreality of a dream.

The prize-giving was a very lengthy business ; the list was continually being mislaid, and frequently the winners were so awestruck at the sound of their own names that they stood gazing into space instead of coming up to receive their prizes. When it was over, there followed cheering and speeches, and presently it came to the turn of Sylvanus Darch, the bailiff, to speak. He spoke very fluently, with a charm that I can only describe as Celtic, an ease, and a sense of humour, which contrasted sharply with the set, slow, fumbling sentences of the farmer who had preceded

him. Sylvanus paid a graceful compliment to the bride, and then broke out into a half jesting but wholly delightful 'praise o' materimony' (as he called it), which brought him shouts of laughter and applause. 'I spake up for materimony,' he said to me afterwards, relapsing unconsciously into the old tongue, 'becas I believe in mun myself.' He pressed me to come some day to his house, and there to make acquaintance with his wife, of whom it was evident he was very proud.

Some weeks later I went to the bailiff's house at Ash Soham. It was early in September, and the corn-harvest was already drawing to its close. The fields had been almost cleared ; here and there the great waggons, drawn by thick-set chestnuts, were carrying the last loads home, or a sheaf placed in the centre of a waste of stubble showed that gleaners might not yet take possession of the place. It was the season of short, hot days and cool, refreshing nights ; of heavy dews that lie thick and grey on the pastures until noon ; when the wild cherry trees begin to take pink and yellow tints, the beeches turn brown and their boughs droop with ripe mast, and the elms grow canary-coloured in patches. I rode through lanes that were full of blackberries and fluffy clematis and scarlet rose-hips ; from the over-arching boughs hung ears of barley caught in passing from the heaped-up wains. The bailiff's house was scarcely bigger than a cottage, thatched, and facing south. The garden was brilliant with red and purple asters, sunflowers, double dahlias, and marigolds. To the west of the house was a shady filbert walk, where the clusters of ripening nuts hung heavily among the yellowing leaves ; and beyond that there was an orchard of pear and bullace trees, among the roots of which the fowls had scooped themselves out little dry holes, in which they squatted, ruffling the dust through their feathers.

The house door was open, and I could see within a tea-table bountifully set, and a pretty young woman making the tea. A little dark-eyed boy about three years old, in a lilac

print pinafore, and with a big straw hat set on the back of his curly head, was seated on a low stool by the door eating deliberately his bread and milk. The child spied me, and called to his mother. She had the apple-blossom complexion, the rippling hair, and the broad red mouth of a Devonshire woman, and she greeted me courteously in the familiar tongue. Sylvanus came in at that moment from his work, and he and his wife asked me to stay and have tea. Then it was that, sitting over the bread and clotted cream and the fragrant honey in the comb, Sylvanus, bit by bit, told me his story: how he had begun life as a poor labourer's son at Oke Reigney, and had gone to work at the Barton, and had fallen in love with Thomasin, the farmer's daughter (then only a little girl), and had gone away to the shires to make his way in the world; how he had returned seven years later, when he was earning good wages, and had proposed for Thomasin's hand. Thomasin had been willing to give it him, but the farmer said sternly, 'Us don't want no miz-alliances.' In four more years Sylvanus had obtained a situation as bailiff, and then the farmer gave his consent. Now they had moved to Ash Soham, a better place, with higher wages, and they were altogether very happy, prosperous people. Sylvanus could afford to give his wife a 'pianny,' and the baby was as magnificently attired on Sundays as any barbaric king. These and other things I learned, Sylvanus excusing himself on the ground that I was from Devonshire, too, and would understand him—'for,' he said, 'the wise men came out of the East, but the warm hearts from the West.'

It was some months before I saw Sylvanus again, or heard anything about him. One bitter March day, I walked over to his house on an errand concerning some Devonshire cream. There was a bleak east wind blowing that seemed to cut my face like a knife. Overhead, sulky-looking clouds charged with sleet were driven westward. There was not a sign of the coming spring anywhere—it might have been December. The gaunt black trees, the black,

close-cropped hedges, the soiled and faded grass of the pastures, the steel-blue of the ponds, gave an indescribable chill to the melancholy landscape. As I hurried along I thought of a place some two hundred miles away—of green and sheltered combes, hollowed out in the round hills; of larch woods already growing faintly green and hung with pink rosettes; of orchards yellow with daffodils; of the outline of Dartmoor, delicately blue against the soft grey sky.

I knocked at the door of the bailiff's house, but could get no answer. At last I went to the back, and after some delay I came upon a slatternly old woman in an outhouse. She refused to let me in at the back door, as contrary to etiquette, and I had to walk back again to the front. After a great deal of fumbling with a key and a bolt, I was admitted to the living-room. But everything was changed. The pot-plants in the window were dead—dead for want of water. The pianoforte was pushed into a corner with its face to the wall; the chairs were huddled together. All was covered with dust and dead flies and cobwebs; and the room smelt mouldy and close. I said that I had come to buy Devonshire cream of Mrs. Darch; but the old woman answered that Mrs. Darch did not live there any more, and that no clotted cream was made there now. I took it to mean that my friends had left Ash Soham, and I started on my road homeward.

A blinding shower of sleet was falling, and when I came to the lane that runs along the high ridge I could scarcely see. But I caught a glimpse of a tall figure in front, and a little one following it, on the foot-path that leads over the hill to the lambing pens. I reached them presently. The child was wailing piteously, and the man stooped to pick him up. It was Sylvanus and his boy—Sylvanus haggard, gaunt, with all the colour gone out of his face, and an expression in his eyes as though he had seen a ghost; his clothes hanging loosely upon him, as clothes do on people who have been very ill; the boy dirty, unkempt, his little bare hands covered with chilblains. Sylvanus saw me, and

flushed red. He held out his hand silently, and then, as we walked together over the brow of the hill, he said bitterly—

'The first time I saw you was at they fine bobsy doings to the flower-show, and I made a speech in praise o' materimony. I cud bite out my tongue now as said they words.'

For three months ago his wife had left his home with another man.

A SORDID PHILOSOPHY

THERE is in South-east Suffolk a desert of moor and wood that lies between a salt estuary and the sea. Part of this is the remains of a very old, perhaps a primeval, forest. Here there are beautiful old oaks and white-stemmed hollies, and ivy-grown thickets, into which neither sun nor wind can penetrate; but the open heath beyond is both sun-baked and wind-harried. In summer it is like a Turkey carpet; the purple and pink of the ling and the bell-heather are closely interwoven with the yellow tufts of dwarf furze; while the air is haunted by the honeyed sweetness that comes and goes with the sunshine and the stirring of the wind. But in winter the bitter east winds, telling of icebergs and frozen seas, sweep over the waste, howling about the belts of Scotch fir, which here and there raise red stems and sombre green boughs above the withered heather.

Alone in this desert, a mile or more from any human habitation, is a cottage originally intended for a keeper's lodge. My family had hired this house for several years; we used to spend a few weeks there every summer in a picnic fashion. One winter, diphtheria of a very bad type broke out near our home, and it was thought best to send away the children to the cottage. I set off at once, with a servant, to prepare for their coming on the following day. When we were on the way to the cottage (it was a long drive of some sixteen or seventeen miles) a telegram overtook the servant, begging her to return at once, as her mother was dying. Thus it happened that I arrived at the cottage quite alone.

It was intensely cold. Snow had begun to fall by the way, and when I reached my journey's end the heath was a great white waste, over which a cutting wind hurried, driving overhead masses of dirty-looking yellow clouds. I set to work to prepare the rooms, with the help of a woman from the little village that was about a mile and a half away, situated in a sheltered hollow of cultivated land. About four o'clock, when it grew dusk, the woman left me, promising to come early on the next morning. She could not spend the night at the cottage, as her husband and children were expecting her at home.

Tea, a bright fire, and books made excellent company for me. It seemed strange and lonely to be so far from any human being; but, as I knew, even should such an improbable thing happen as that burglars should try to enter the house—in which they could have no possible object—the doors and windows were very securely barred and bolted. At eleven o'clock I went upstairs to my bedroom, and opened the casement and looked out. The snow had ceased to fall, and a bright moon was shining, making the shadows of the little group of Scotch firs near the house, and of the belt of them half a mile away, look black and sinister upon the smooth white sheet. The wind had dropped, and it was intensely, breathlessly cold. There was not a creature, not a fox nor an owl, not a movement of air nor of trees to be seen. Everything seemed dead. I was just about to step back from the window, when I saw a black figure, that of a short man or boy, creep wearily out of the belt of firs over the snow towards the cottage. He seemed half-frozen, and so weak that he could scarcely drag one leg after the other. As he came nearer I could see that he had a very white face, and the pale blonde hair that generally only belongs to little children. He looked like a boy, but might possibly be older. He was dressed shabbily in black—a clerk from a country town, I fancied. Bitterly cold as it was, he wore neither greatcoat nor comforter. He knocked feebly at the door, turning

round once or twice to look up and down the road, as though he were expecting to see someone.

'What do you want?' I asked from my window.

'I have lost my way—I'm exhaustered with cold and 'unger, miss—I'm perished,' he said in a broken voice.

I unbarred the door, and he reeled in and fell down in a heap on the hearth. The warmth soon brought him back to consciousness. I hastily set the kettle on the fire and went to the pantry to fetch some food. When I returned he was sitting in an armchair. I had relit the lamp, and the light fell full upon him; upon his tired white face that I had at first thought was that of a boy, but which I now saw to be older in expression; upon his hands, which evidently had not been hardened by any coarse manual work; upon his threadbare clothes, soaked through by the snow and soiled here and there with dull-coloured stains. . . . Suddenly a horrible idea flashed upon me. About a week before a robbery and murder had been committed by a young man at one of the eastern coast towns. Every newspaper was full of the loathsome details and of portraits or descriptions of the murderer, who had escaped. Involuntarily I cried, 'You are Cannell!'

He tried to rise from his chair, and his face twitched. 'You're—you're—laffing at me,' he said, trying to recover composure.

But, seized with fear and disgust, I cried, 'Get up; you shall not stay a minute longer in this house!'

It only needed a little resolution on my part to force him to go. He was absolutely weak and exhausted, and crouched helplessly in his chair. 'Get up,' I cried again, and opened the door on the great waste of snow. A current of frozen air rushed in. I had taken down a heavy riding crop from its place over the mantelpiece, and held it, with the butt-end raised, as though I were ready to strike him unless he went. But he groaned, and covered his face with his hands.

'You'll kill me, miss,' he said.

I had had very little to do with the criminal classes. Considering how many horrors are reported every day in the newspapers, it is comforting to reflect how seldom the ordinary walk of life brings anyone in contact with murderers. Once only I had been called upon to visit a man in gaol, and then I had been filled with the same unpleasant feeling of visiting 'poor relations' that a visit to the monkey house will give one. The prisoners looked horribly like everybody else, except, of course, for the difference in dress.

The same thought returned to me now. Cannell was dreadfully human, and I could not close my eyes to this, nor treat him like some wild beast, and turn him out into the freezing night. He was quite right; it would kill him, and I had no wish to take it upon myself to be his executioner. I shut the door and put some food on the table.

'You can eat and drink, and then you must go,' I said. He crept up to the table, but was too weak to help himself to the food, and I had to do it. I had fetched a flask of brandy, and was going to mix some with hot water, but he stopped me. 'I'm temperance,' he said. The food and the warmth were reviving him. He drank greedily of the hot tea, thanking me politely as I gave him each thing. Even in his half-dead condition he held his cup genteelly, crooking his little finger. When he had finished, he turned his dull eyes on me and said, 'I suppose, miss, you'll let me stop the night. You made a mistake, miss, about—about my name. It's not what you said—it's Sydney Spenser—but perhaps you won't mention my 'aving been 'ere, for family reasons, being temporarily in trouble. . . . It's difficult for you, miss, who have everything so nice and proper in this 'ome, and being a lady too, to understand anyone getting into trouble, but you don't know the temptations to—to get into trouble when one's in pore circumstances.'

'Do you mean in want?' I asked.

'Not want exactly, miss—not want of bread—but want of many other things that seem more than bread—decent

clothes to go to church in on a Sunday and to live respectable, so you aren't ashamed of visitors seeing your 'ome, because it looks so pore and common. It's the feeling of the thing, miss. People look down on you, and think you belong to the lower classes. Coming 'ome from the orfice one night, a gentleman on 'orseback drops his whip, and he says to me, "Young feller," says he, "just pick up that whip," and he offers me threepence in coppers. He took me for a working-man, I suppose, my clothes were so old and shabby. That kind of thing, miss, is very 'ard to bear.'

'But the great thing surely is to be honest and upright, and people must respect you then,' I urged.

'So they say, but I don't believe them, miss. It's what you 'ave to spend, and what you wear, makes you looked up to. It's them that wears the shoe that knows where it pinches. People who 'aven't the temptations don't need to get into trouble. It isn't much credit to them to keep out of it. I heard a doctor once say, miss, that you're born with the germs of the illness that you'll die of. I believe, miss, that you're born too with the temptations inside of you that will ruin you.'

'But you can resist the temptations.'

'Some you can, miss—those that don't tempt you very 'ard. I took the pledge, and kept it. I never could agree with drinking and low ways. I go to church or chapel regular on a Sunday. I think it doesn't look right not to go to some place of worship. I kep' myself as respectable as I knew how, but I only got a salary of 25*l.* a year. You can't help living and dressing very pore on that, miss.'

I made up the fire, and left him to sleep upon the hearth with some blankets. I locked my door and settled myself into an armchair. It was out of the question to go to bed, even had there been no reason to sit up. My nerves were in such a strained condition that sleep would have been impossible to me. Thoughts of the murdered man—of the

murderer below—of his sordid philosophy—preyed upon me. Was there some truth, after all, in the old Calvinist doctrine of predestination, which had taken a new form in his words, 'I believe that you're born with the temptations inside you that will ruin you'?

The bitterly cold night wore slowly away, every minute of it fraught with anguish, and doubt, and heart-searching to me. When the dawn began to show itself I heard sounds of stirring below, and by the time the crimson sun rose over the snowy edge, Cannell had slipped softly out of the house and was limping along the road towards the market-town, where there is a railway station, and where ships come up the river.

About midday the children arrived—very hungry, and inquiring anxiously after their dinner, although there wanted another hour to the orthodox dinner-time. They had a piece of news to give me: 'There was such a crowd when we came to the last town before we got here. Nanna stopped the fly and asked a man what it was, and he said they had caught a horrid murderer who had murdered an old man at Yarmouth. Nanna says they'll hang him. Hanging's too good for him, she says. Aren't you glad they caught him! May we have pancakes for dinner? We always do when we're at the Cottage, you know.'

IN THE MANTONS

It was a warm Sunday afternoon in May, thirty years or more ago. John Mutimer and his family had finished dinner in the little back parlour behind the shop, whence, in spite of closed doors, a week-day smell of brown holland and cheese and soap leaked out. Mr. Mutimer was a lean, spare man, with a face that looked as if it had been cut out of wood, expressionless and deal-coloured. He was a scrupulously honest man, a Strict-and-Particular Baptist, devoted to 'the Cause,' and uncompromising in matters of doctrine. In those days, when Dissenters were still in the shadow, there was present with them—even among the prosperous—the remembrance of slight and of contempt, and of the former persecution which gave them the dignity of an oppressed and faithful people. His wife, Emmaretta, was a refined-looking woman, with eyes of an intense blue, the blue of periwinkle flowers. Her complexion was delicately white; it seemed as though all the colour had ebbed away from the cheeks, which might in former years have been softly rounded and rosy; there was an air of sad serenity about the face which reminded you of some Italian Madonnas.

Mr. Mutimer, followed a little regretfully by Noah Upson (Emmaretta's son by a former marriage), set out for afternoon chapel; Emmaretta and the two little Mutimers—one, Isaac or Dikey, a child of three, the other still in arms—were going to the Mantons, some meadows half a mile off, where Dikey was bent on gathering 'cuckoos' or meadow orchids. Their progress was slow. Emmaretta, dressed in

her Sunday black silk, and with a big striped lavender and white shawl, folded three-corner-wise, so as to end in a neat point behind, was pulling the baby in a go-cart, while Dikey walked beside her, holding a fold of her dress in his little fat hand. The meadows were sweet with cowslips, and the banks covered with pearly stars of stitchwort and little spikes of blue speedwell. The trees were growing hourly green—green of every shade; the beeches delicately pale, the sycamores golden-bronze, the hawthorn exquisitely vivid. The reddish-brown of the elm blossom had given place to the yellow-tinted seed vessels that covered every branch of the stately trees. The afternoon sun was shining aslant through all the fresh new leaves, making them transparent, transfiguring them with a halo of warm light. The nightingales in the tall hedgerows were singing to their mates—three melancholy, questioning notes, and then a burst of jubilant music like bubbling water. The Mantons are beautiful, sheltered meadows in the fold of a hill, watered by a little stream, and sloping away from a great wood. Here 'cuckoos' grew abundantly—dark purple orchids with little green-veined wings. Dikey gathered them ruthlessly, breaking them off with no stems, trotting to and fro laboriously, to drop each one separately, as it was gathered, into the go-cart upon the long-suffering baby who was benignly falling asleep.

There was a great oak at the far end of the Mantons, whose big, wide-spreading roots made a comfortable seat. Emmaretta made her way towards this, meaning to sit down and rest. But when she came nearer she saw a man lying outstretched on the grass, on the further side of the tree. He looked very ill; he was evidently in one of the last stages of decline: a lank, ill-made figure, poorly clad, with a thin white face, pale red hair, and brown eyes that his complaint made preternaturally liquid and shining. It was a poor, weak, good-natured face that stirred your pity. When Emmaretta saw him she dropped the handle of the go-cart, and stood looking at him with awe and joy

unspeakable, as if Heaven had suddenly opened before her. But the next minute, when the man had shambled upon his feet, and came to meet her with his arms outstretched, she shrank back.

'Oh, Davy, Davy, you ma'n't, you ma'n't. I'm Mr. Mutimer's wife now. Oh, my dare, my dare, you'll hev to goo. You ma'n't stay, Davy; you ma'n't stay.'

The man stood facing her with an abashed expression, and she went on hurriedly, 'I can't come with you, my dare; I ma'n't leave Mr. Mutimer, and my babe, and Dikey. They said you wer dead in Australia—Sam Dunnett wrote it in a letter—but I never believed it, Davy; and seven year come and goo and more, and no sign from you; and I did for the best; and the parish only 'lowed me sixpence a week for each child, and a stone of flour. But I worked and made out on it, until my little Maw'r fared to be ill of the decline, what all your fam'ly, my dare, hev gone off in. That allers wer such a pingly child, wer Annie; and when the doctor say she wer to hev meat and wine and such like of the best, I had nawthin' to give her to take to. And I couldn't goo out stone-picking and leave her when she fared to be roight bad. . . . And Mr. Mutimer, at the shop, he wer kind, and he never asked for the money as I 'ew him; and if it warn't for him my little children would hev hed to go without. When Annie wer dying, I say to her, I say, "I shall hev no black to put on for you, my darling, and I can't follow you if I hev no black, and it fare to break my heart." And she say, so gentle, "Don't cry, mother. . . . I love you better than all the worl' beside," she say, "better than all the worl' beside." And when she lay by the wall and I set by her (she looked roight beautiful in her shroud with tea-roses all a-down it), I see Mr. Mutimer come past the housen, and when he come to mine, Noah call him to see how pretty little sister looked. And Mr. Mutimer, he come in, and he speak so kind, my heart fared to break; and he say that you wer dead beyond the seas as Sam Dunnett wrote word, and

that seven year wer come and gone, and no word nor sign ; and Mr. Mutimer, he say if I would marry him, Noah should hev a home, and when he growed older he would take him into the shop, and he would do by mine as he would do by his own. . . . And what could I do, Davy ?' she cried passionately ; 'what could I do ? I never thought of any man but you since I wer a little mawther, and I fare to love you now, my dare, my dare, but I'm Mr. Mutimer's wedded wife, and the mother of his children—and one a babe still at the breast. He hev been good to me, Davy, and I must be a faithful wife to him.'

Davy sobbed as she spoke, but Emmaretta could not shed a tear. It seemed to her as though she had cried all the tears allotted to her, when she had cried her heart out over her little dead mawther those years ago, and had consented to be John Mutimer's wife. Dikey came up curiously and peered at the strange man silently from behind the shelter of his mother's gown, but neither of them heeded the child. Davy had not much to say ; his story was quickly told—the story of little delays and neglects which had amounted together to the sum total of a great desertion. There was no reason for it all, and that made it seem the more piteous. He faltered out a few excuses ; he could not write himself, but had always meant to have had a letter written for him ; things had never prospered with him, and he had had no money to send home. But Emmaretta did not need to hear his explanations ; she had nothing but love and forgiveness for him ; whatever he might do, her heart always gave him a free pass. He was a poor creature, but she had loved him for himself—for his faults, perhaps, and that is the most enduring love of all. The sight of his poverty and illness pierced her heart. He would go back to Ipswich that night, he said ; he would not disturb her peace. A doctor in Ipswich had promised to give him a ticket for the hospital, 'and,' he said wearily, 'it won't be for long.' No one should know of his home-coming.

That evening, when the dag, or dewy mist, was rising

in the Mantons, a broken-looking figure passed along the village street in the twilight. There was an arbour in Mr. Mutimer's garden, and on warm Sunday evenings the shopkeeper would sit there and hear Noah say the portion of Scripture that he had learnt. The air was sweet with the smell of the wallflowers and the musk in the borders. A great white owl in a meadow rose heavily out of a hollow tree and sailed through the twilight with a soft bubbling sound. In the calm of the dusk every noise—the barking of a distant dog, the ripple of the stream that flows through the village green, the shrill cry of a bat—sounded solemn and distinct. The wayfarer paused by the privet hedge and looked over it. He could see Noah's ungainly figure, and even discern the boy's white face, 'the effigy of yourself,' as Emmaretta had fondly described him. He could plainly hear the boy's voice, strangely like his own, stumbling over the words of a parable, 'And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.' There was a pause, and then the boy, who could not remember his task, repeated, 'And the door—was shut—the door was shut.' The wayfarer passed feebly on up the dark hill, until—for a moment—his poor, stooping figure stood out on the ridge against the sky, and then vanished, leaving home and wife and child for ever behind him.

'THE ROIGHT MAN'

THERE is at Ash Soham a lonely cottage standing upon a high ridge. From the door you look away over a sweep of undulating country—over three church towers and four windmills; and at harvest time there seems to be a great sea of corn around you and beneath you, rustling and surging. In the hottest days of summer there is always a breeze here; through the winter and spring the bitter north and east winds stab and search every corner of the dilapidated place. There used to be a block of houses here, but a fire destroyed the other cottages, leaving this solitary one and a heap of charred and blackened ruins to the left of it. The garden is a poor, wind-swept, deserted place, with a few straggling currant bushes, a crop of groundsel and couch grass, and a couple of gaunt bullace trees in the hedgerow. It was to this forlorn abode that a man and his wife came one Michaelmas. They brought very little furniture with them—a table, two chairs, a clock, an old-fashioned corner-cupboard, and a few odd plates and cups were all their goods. The man, James Foulger, was a tall, strongly-built fellow. He had been handsome once, but he had now the swollen features and heavy eyes of a drunkard. His wife, Sarah, was small, dark, and sallow, with a face like that of the Queen of Spades; but the whole was redeemed by a pair of black eyes that were full of expression and intelligence. Never were there eyes through which the spirit looked more plainly. They were sad eyes often enough; but at the least sign of sympathy they would kindle with pride and

resentment. The Foulgers belonged to the tradesman class, which is divided from the labourers' by a great gulf in feelings and interests. Village life is as full of these distinctions and differences as what is known as Society can be; and by ignoring these delicate shades you can give unpardonable offence. Foulger was a bricklayer by trade, and had been a good workman by fits and starts, but he had always been given to drinking bouts, and in these he would behave like a madman. There were many stories in the village of his drunken rages, but no one ever dared to question Mrs. Foulger. She held herself proudly aloof, poor soul. She was scrupulously clean and neat; her threadbare gowns were deftly mended and turned; her Sunday bonnet, old and faded as it was, was always worn with an air that made it pass muster; there was a defiant respectability in every line of her dress and carriage.

It was Michaelmas when the Foulgers moved from a neighbouring village to Ash Soham. October, with its mellow days, its pomp of splendid colours, its dreamy calm, when the air is full of the last fragrance of the mignonette and the sweet sultans, gave place presently to the chill and the desolation of November. There are times, then, in South-east Suffolk when a white sea-fog creeps inland, and hangs over the country for four or five days at a while. The trees are either bare, or are hung with a scattering of drab and brown leaves; the frost has blackened the dahlias and touched the cabbages in the cottage gardens, and there is a heavy smell of decay and rank moisture. The thick mist condenses on the boughs or on the eaves of houses, and drips with a dull rhythmic sound; and from the east there blows a dank draught over the hills. It was on such a morning as this that the butcher-boy in his cart, from Ipswich, was going his weekly round through Ash Soham, and Bocking, and Shottisburgh. The cheerful sound of his horn broke the misty stillness of the lanes. The Foulgers' house stood some way back from the road, and the lad got out of his cart and stood at the door knocking. But he

obtained no answer, and after a while he pushed the door open. There, in a pool of blood, on the hearth lay Mrs. Foulger, with the heavy corner-cupboard upon her.

The lad brought help from the nearest house—a carpenter's wife, a good, kindly creature, who hastily made an improvised bed in the kitchen, and lifted the poor unconscious woman upon it. The doctor came. It was impossible, he said, to estimate all her injuries; but that there was more than enough to kill her was evident. She could not last more than twenty-four hours, if so long. Possibly she might regain consciousness. The carpenter's wife established herself at the bedside. Nothing was seen or heard of James Foulger. Sarah, a ghastly object, with all her features—save her eyes, which were closed—battered and wounded past recognition, lay there, breathing heavily, and groaning a little, from time to time. The upright clock ticked loudly; it seemed to the good woman who was watching that it ticked in an agonised, despairing way, as, indeed, they say in Suffolk, clocks do when their master or mistress is dying. After a while Sarah opened her eyes; her shapeless lips moved. 'It was an accident,' she said, looking at her nurse, Mrs. Gathercole, and defying her with her eyes to dare to say it was not. But Mrs. Gathercole soothed her: 'Of course it was, and a terrible accident too, pulling down the cupboard a-top of her, and striking her head agin' the fire-irons.' Just then the curate came in—a good, well-meaning boy, who had—as far as men and women are concerned—everything to learn; but he had the love for them that gives a man the heart to learn, and then to bear his knowledge bravely. *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner* is the reward of such learning; and the first step to it is this: *Tout aimer c'est tout comprendre.* He was a red-haired, freckled youth, who was most at his ease when he was playing cricket or football with his village lads, and the sight of the poor mutilated face, and the solemn living eyes set in it, gave the honest fellow a lump in his throat and a sound like a sob in his voice. He began humbly

and awkwardly enough: 'Would Mrs. Foulger like me to say some prayers, or—or would it only bother her?' Mrs. Foulger signed for him to stay, and Mrs. Gathercole went out into the back-house to perform some household duties.

The curate said the Lord's Prayer very slowly, trying to command his rough jerky voice. When he reached the clause, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,' Sarah stopped him. 'Hard,' she murmured, 'hard!' The curate thought she must be referring to her husband, but she went on, each word costing her pain, and a brave effort to overcome it. 'It was my sister Martha. She did her best to take Jim from me, before I married him, and I said I'd never forgive her. But I'm dying now—and I'll do it.'

'Where's Jim!' she asked after a little interval. Mrs. Gathercole, putting her head into the kitchen, answered that Mr. Foulger was out, that he must have gone out before the accident happened, and that he had not been found. 'Tell him I've had an accident. Tell him to come —an accident,' Sarah repeated.

It was not until late in the afternoon, when the growing darkness and the fog together seemed to press like a weight upon the dripping world, that James Foulger came home. There is a great wood on one of the clay ridges, and at the outskirts of this wood a dreary pond, overarched by elms. Round this pond he had wandered all day, wishing to drown himself and to end his misery, but at the plunge his courage always failed him. The water looked as cold as death, and as black as ink; here and there some rotting leaves floated upon it; and all the while the measured drip, drip, drip from the trees marked the slow moments like the ticking of a clock. A gamekeeper saw him, and gave him Sarah's message. The man laid a stress on the words 'an accident,' and looked searchingly at Jim, but Foulger said nothing, turned round, and slouched off homeward.

Sarah recognised his step as he came down the lane. He sat down at the foot of her bed with his head averted.

He could not face the sight of her. She was dying now; indeed, every part of her except her eyes seemed already dead, and the poor mutilated body already growing cold and stiff; only from the windows of her eyes there still looked a passion of love, of deathless love—love invincible. She was past speech, past seeing, or hearing, or feeling anything in the world but his presence, and her overwhelming love; and so it was that she died.

Four days later she was buried. The mist had gone, giving place to a mild, pale November day, with wet blue distances and a tender grey sky. The service was over, and the mourners had dispersed; the sexton was filling in the grave, and the clay and pebbles were rattling down on the coffin-lid. The curate had taken off his surplice, and was leaning against the churchyard gate. 'Pity,' he said to Gathercole the carpenter, 'that that poor woman should have wasted her devotion on a drunken brute—pity she hadn't a good husband.'

'Why, bless you, sir,' said Gathercole, grimly, 'so she had, at one time. I knew her years ago, when she lived at Bocking. She wer' married to as respectable a young feller as ever I see. But she thought nothing on him. He wer' that taken up with her he couldn't refuse her anything, he couldn't; but she never wer' contented. He caught a chill, kind o' sudden, and died; and then this feller come along, and she married him before the year was out. He (Foulger) were kind o' promised to her sister Martha; but this one, Sarah, made him break with her; she *would* have him. She knew roight enough about his drinking. That made no difference. Why, sir, I tell you, they (women, that is) don't think nothing of being beaten, and starved, and killed, so long as it's the roight man that does it.'

A RESTLESS SPIRIT

JOB was lingering in the church square by the almshouses. A climbing damask rose covered one side of the house opposite the church tower; some long, unpruned branches waved above the tiled roof, and caught the slanting rays of the afternoon sun. The blossoms on them were of a lovely transparent red, like a flame, and the boy could smell their rich sweet scent from the tombstone on which he sat, which was a tribute to the power of the odour, for as a general rule Job had no nose either for good or for ill. An old woman, the inmate of the almshouse, was talking to him, leaning against the jamb of the doorway.

'You come from t'other side of Suffolk, you say? There's a mort of things then for you to see in Milbury. Been in the church? That's where oold Harry South lie. He hev been laid there for moor than two hundred and fifty year, he hev, but there's some as say he hev noo rest in his grave, noohow. He lived at Farlingay Hall, on the way to Edmundstow; he had mighty possessions, he had, but that did not content him. He took the commons from the people, did oold Harry South; and, after that, he couldn't get noo rest. One day he happened on a boy carrying a dinner in a basket, and he say, "What hev you there, bread and meat?" And the boy didn't know it were oold Harry South, and he say, "No," he say, "'tis bread. For now that oold roogue Harry South hath taken away our commons 'tis only bread we hev to our dinners." When oold Harry South he hear that he wer pierced to the heart, and he goo

home to Farlingay Hall, and in one o' the rooms that front the yard by the dovey-house he cut his throat. The room were shet up ever after, until Lady South—she were mother of the lady that live there now, she wer—come there more'n forty years ago, and I wer charwoman, and were set to scrub the floor, and there wer a great pool o' dried-up blood that had stained the floor, and noo scrubbing could move it; they wer forced to cut it away. But the blood had eaten kind o' into the wood, and there the mark stay until the Judgment Day.'

The sound of the kettle boiling recalled the old woman into her house. Job looked up and down the road, and finally, with a sigh, returned to his sheep by the market-cross, which was a sort of great wooden umbrella set in the centre of an irregular square of crooked gabled houses. Jack—a shaggy grey sheep-dog with friendly eyes—had been keeping guard over the flock, while Job walked a little way up the London road to see if his master's son were coming. The lad had waited at Milbury during the best part of the day, hoping for his arrival, but the afternoon was wearing on, and he had now no choice but to start alone for a fourteen-mile walk to Edmundstow, where the sheep were due on the following morning. It would be impossible, since there were so many young lambs in the flock, to arrive there before night, and Job would be forced to spend the night on the road. Night to him began somewhere about nine o'clock, and lasted until four A.M., but it was then a time of the year when it is never quite dark. The prospect of spending the mystic hours upon 'oold Harry South's' property was not cheering, since the old woman had hinted that he had 'noo rest in his grave.' But there still remained some hours of sunlight, and Job set out manfully along the straight dusty road that had a deep margin of grass, bordered on either side by fields that were milk-white with sweet Dutch clover, or pink with saintfoin. There were other wayfarers besides himself—labourers coming home from work, boys driving cows that had been

milked at the farms, and were now returning to their rich pastures by the side of the slow stream, where the banks were beautiful with yellow flags and blue forget-me-not; and once a carriage with ladies, at whom Job stared with deliberation, impressed by one figure in particular—a tall woman with a white face and sad eyes. The cultivated fields grew scantier, and the grassy margins broadened, until Job and his bleating flock reached a great flat stretch of down-land, broken by pine woods, with an illimitable distance of down and pine and a horizon of rich intense blue, where the wood met the tranquil evening sky.

By this time the other wayfarers had departed, and a great stillness and loneliness seemed to have descended upon the earth. The twilight crept westward, darkening the east, and gradually drinking up the colours everywhere, turning yellow into white, and red into black. Hundreds of rabbits had come out of their holes, and were sitting up curiously as Job and his charges went slowly by; they were very bold, and it was only when the lad flung a stone at one that a company of them flashed their white tails and disappeared. Presently the dusky air was full of the sharp cry of the bats, swinging to and fro after flies, and from the dark bars and clumps of wood came the distant hooting of owls.

A village lad leads a life of almost immutable custom. At this hour and season a country hamlet is alive with men and women and children. The village street that has been so silent and deserted all day is full of voices —men shouting to each other on their allotments, women standing talking on the green, and those children who have so far escaped the doom of bed flitting to and fro; while the sheep-dogs bark continuously, and the ducks and geese on the farm ponds quack and hiss. The loneliness of the down struck a chill into Job's very heart. The short grass was wringing wet with cool dew, and the sheep loitered to browse upon it; the little lambs were limping wearily, and Job resolved to make a halt as soon as he had passed out of

a wood of pine and birch through which the white road lay. The pale stems of the birches shone strangely out of the black depths of the wood ; overhead was stretched the great serene breadth—broken here by the dark trees—of the starry sky ; but the bright twinkling lights seemed too far off and too unknown to give Job any sense of company. The sickly, heavy smell of the flock, and of the cloud of dust that moved with it, had given way before the freshness of the night and the aromatic fragrance of the pines. But the lad was too much oppressed with the sense of the strangeness and the desolation to heed anything else. When he reached the heart of the wood, there, to the left, walking towards him from among the dark trees, came a stately figure in white, with a white hood shading a white face. White is the conventional colour of ghosts, as Job knew, and the boy gave a yell of terror. Without doubt he had crossed the midnight path of 'oold Harry South.' He stayed for one moment, maimed by fright, while the hair stood up in a bristling line along Jack's backbone ; in another second the boy would have taken to his heels. But a deep-toned voice called to him not to be frightened. 'Surely,' the woman said, 'there is no need to be afraid of me.' And as she came nearer Job recognised the pale face and sad eyes of the woman who had passed him in the carriage that afternoon. 'Beg pardon, missus,' Job said, when his parched tongue, which clove to the roof of his mouth, allowed him to speak. 'I was wholly scared.' 'What did you think I was ?' the lady asked ; 'a ghost—an unhappy, restless spirit ?' The boy nodded. 'Ah !' she cried, with a sad smile—a smile that only touched her lips and left her eyes unchanged—'an unhappy, restless spirit I am, but with a body.'

To Job's mind an unhappy lady or gentleman presented an incongruity of a rare and remarkable kind. Plenty to eat and to drink, and leisure to devote to sport or to blissful idleness, seemed to him to ensure a Paradise upon earth. To be sure, illness and death assailed them as they did everybody else, but rich folk were hedged in by doctors and

unknown luxuries and alleviations—'the best of everything to take to,' as the phrase ran at Ash Soham—and if they did succumb they had grand and stately funerals that must minister unspeakable comfort to the mourners, by reason of the pomp and the lavish display of black; so that life was smoothed and adorned to the very end. But this lady was so evidently miserable that she excited Job's sympathy, which was chiefly expressed by his staring at her with his mouth open. She signed to the lad to sit by her on the trunk of a felled tree, and she began to talk in a disjointed way. Job understood little of her meaning, but the deep plaintive voice and the melancholy eyes—eyes of a subtle mixture of grey and green, like a troubled northern sea—held his attention.

'I am haunted,' she said, 'haunted by all the misery and the poverty that there is in other lives. Why should I be clothed and fed when they go bare and want bread? Why should I live in a palace of ease while they swarm in cellars and hovels? I never knew it, I never dreamt of such things until my eyes were opened once in London, and I saw. . . . I saw the wretched drunken men—and the women, poor degraded creatures who sell themselves for food and for tawdry finery, while I'—and she held up her hands to show the glittering rings on her slender fingers and the diamond bracelets on her wrists—'I am hedged from every breath of evil, and am told it belongs to my station to wear such things as these. What can I do for them? There is a gulf set between them and me; my hands cannot reach them. I don't speak their language, nor they mine. They say it would do more harm than good if I gave them all that I have. Yet who was it that said, "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor?" Who was it? Ah! who can answer that? Was it a God, or only a poor ignorant man, like ourselves, groping in the dark, trying to solve the problems after his fashion?'

The light was now beginning to dawn in the calm wide sky; a chill air was moving in the little wood, and birds

began to stir and to call to each other. A mouse-hunt, a pretty slender creature with a soft furry coat and cunning eyes, slipped across the path in front of them. The lady was silent a while, and then she went on, 'The misery was always near me, but I never knew it. Do you know those prints (I have seen them in cottages) of Napoleon's grave at St. Helena? When you first see them you see nothing in them but the slab of stone and the willows; and then after you have looked a while, or when someone has shown it to you, you see the ghost of Napoleon between the willows; and when you have once seen that you can never see anything else in the print again. So it was with me. Now there is no other sight possible but the inequality of lives. It is always there before me—the misery, the unspeakable misery, of the inequality of lives.'

She rose slowly, with a deep sigh, and turned with heavy steps to the wood. Job watched the tall bowed figure until it vanished among the trees, and then he set out again on his road.

It was about seven o'clock when the lad reached the outskirts of Edmundstow. An old labourer walking briskly behind him caught him up; the man had a piece of news upon his mind, and he told it to Job.

'The lady at Farlingay Hall hev taken her life,' he said. 'She were kind o' crazed, poor dare. They missed her last night, but they couldn't happen on her nohow. But this morn as the keeper come through Farlingay Wood he see her on the ground. He say she wer white as driven snow. Poor dare, poor dare! Ever since oold Harry South took the commons from the people the Souths fare to be out o' their right mind, kind o'. They say that's a curse that might be loosed if they gave back the commons to the people; but they're like the young man in the parable—they fare exceeding sorrowful, for that's a hard saying, that is.'

A HOMELY TRAGEDY

THERE is a high ridge of heavy clay that runs for six miles or more to the west of the Far End of Ash Soham. It is in winter a desolate stretch of open country; a dreary road set with deep ditches on either side; heavy ploughed lands and chill meadows with sullen-looking stagnant ponds and 'pits' whence all the drinking-water is drawn for the neighbouring homesteads. Here the north and east winds blow their keenest. Half-way between the Far End of Ash Soham and Bocking a little lane branches off from the main road, and at the end of it, in the heart of fields, stands a lonely farmhouse of two gables, built in lath and plaster and facing east. The house is moated, as so many homesteads in Suffolk are; another moat encloses a kitchen garden with rows of cabbage, a bush of 'May-balls' or guelder-roses, and a tumble-down 'bower.'

It was in this farm that Ursula Thirkettle had lived all her life. She had been born in it, and when her father died she married the in-coming tenant, Bethuel Thirkettle, who was her cousin. She was a middle-aged woman now, plain and hard-featured, with the careworn expression of labouring women who have scarcely ever tasted pleasure, or even rest, through all their days of care and toil. Her eyes were blue, as Suffolk eyes so often are; the hair a bleached and faded yellowish flaxen; the mouth large and kindly; every line of her homely person told of motherliness and of honest work. Her husband, a grim, taciturn man, was a small working farmer, leading much the same life as a

labourer as regards hardship, but superior to the labourer's lot in so much that he was his own master and had something to look forward to—an aim in life. For the rest of it, his days were uninterrupted toil, from early morning to night, and like so many dwellers in the lonely fields, he had contracted a habit of unbroken silence. There had been seven children, but only two, Joseph and Dinah, had lived to grow up. The other five slept under little grassy hillocks behind the square red-brick meeting-house of the Strict-and-Particular Baptists at Ash Soham. Joseph—or Jewsuf, as his name was pronounced—was a strong, handsome fellow, an idler by nature, 'bone-lazy.' Dinah, ten years older than her brother, had a face and figure like an eight-day clock. She was hardworking, slow of speech and of heart, and thick of understanding. There were troubles early between Jewsuf and his father, troubles that made Mrs. Thirkettle's life a burden to her. She loved husband, children and home with all the concentration of her simple heart; her son was her pride and her terror. One evening, when Jewsuf was a lad of eighteen, he came to find his mother in the little dairy, where she was pouring the new milk into the great earthenware panchions that are brown without and cream colour within. It was growing dusk, and the blackbirds were singing in the bushes; a smell of wallflower and of red blossoming rybes came in through the open lattice that looked northward over the garden. The lad had something to tell his mother, a story of a drunken frolic that had ended badly; he had fired a rick belonging to a farmer in Ash Soham, and the man threatened to take legal proceedings against Jewsuf unless he paid down 20*l.* immediately. Mrs. Thirkettle was speechless with dismay. She did not possess a penny of her own, and it was not in the least likely that Bethuel would consent to part with such a sum as 20*l.* Jewsuf would have to go to prison and be disgraced for ever. But Jewsuf thought otherwise. He knew that his father had put by that amount, or more, towards his rent. His mother knew where this money was

kept and could easily take it. Jewsuf would pay the owner of the rick, and would go away to a place in the shires where young men who could milk were offered large wages and their journey expenses. There he would stay until the affair had blown over, and until he could pay back a part at least of the 20*l.*

Mrs. Thirkettle leant against the wall with a face as white as her apron. 20*l.* . . . Jewsuf gone to the shires. . . . The thoughts, she afterwards said, 'buzzed in an' out of my head like bees. I fared wholly stammed. Jewsuf, he com to me where I stand agin the wall, and he say, "Mother," he say, "Mother, if you don't do this for me, I shall surely go to Bridewell." "My poor chap," I say, "I couldn't go for to do such a thing," I say; "Fah-ther would be rare an' wexed," I say.' But in the end Jewsuf prevailed.

It had been arranged by Jewsuf, and mournfully agreed to by Mrs. Thirkettle, that she should not confess her theft to her husband until her son had had time to leave the country. The three days that elapsed were days of purgatory to the poor woman.

Thursday came, the Stonebridge market day. Bethuel and Dinah drove off together in the rickety old gig with five tuneful little pigs netted in at the back; but they no more heeded the familiar cries than a London lady is disturbed by the roar and rattle of the streets when she drives through them in her brougham. It was May, and the clay ridge was beautiful. The hedges were white with hawthorn and fragrant with the almond scent of the blossom; the meadows were gay with buttercups and rich with tender spring grass, and the deep ditches were clothed by vividly pink campion. The distances were bathed in pale blue mist; the 'dag' which had lain along the valleys had floated away, and every tender bough and blade of grass sparkled with drops of water. The old guelder-rose bush in the moated garden was covered with pale green May-balls that were hourly growing white, and the sunny freshness of the spring air and the song of the 'mavishes' and the nightingales in the quickset hedge floated

in at the kitchen window where Ursula Thirkettle stood, trying to pare the potatoes that lay in a little brown heap before her, shining with washing and scrubbing. The heavy salt tears crept down her careworn face. She had been all her life scrupulously, delicately honest, and now it was in dishonesty that she had sinned, so at least it seemed to her. 'That wer wholly the same with Moses, that wer,' she thought. 'He wer the meekest man that walked the earth, so the Old Book say. And yet he make a sad mistake once through lack of meekness, and we know he never com to the Promised Land.'

Earlier than was his wont the farmer came home. Ursula saw at once, in his face, that something had happened. He went straight upstairs to the bedroom where his money was kept. Mrs. Thirkettle caught hold of Dinah's arm.

'What hev your fah-ther happened on, gal?' she cried.

'Somethin' about a rick, and Jewsuf, mother, but I dun' knaw nawthin' roightly about it.'

Dinah moved ponderously out of the room and up the creaking stairs to her room, where she took off her market-day finery and put it away in an oak 'hutch' or chest. While she did this, slowly and methodically, a tragedy was going on downstairs. The farmer came white and speechless into the kitchen. He stood facing his wife with such a terrible look in his eyes that she fell upon her knees and hid her face in her hands. The homely kitchen where she had spent so much of her life became suddenly a torture-chamber of unknown horror. Everything seemed to have lost its familiar aspect, and to have become strange and monstrous. After a while words came to Bethuel. He lifted up his right arm and he cursed the wretched woman; cursed her with a wonderful Biblical rhythm—in her going out and in her coming in; in her waking and in her sleeping; in her lying down and in her uprising; in her life and in her death, and at the Judgment Day. The blood ran backwards in her veins as she listened. She had hoped he would have struck her: any blows, any death-stroke would have been better than this.

He bade her begone ; she was no wife of his. Then silence fell again upon him, and Mrs. Thirkettle crept up the stairs.

Presently Dinah came to her. 'That fare a roight bad job, mother, that do,' she said, staring fixedly at Mrs. Thirkettle with her dull round eyes. 'You hed best goo to uncle's, at Stonebridge. He say he can't put up with the mawther he hev, not noohow. She'll hev to goo, I suppoose, and you can stop along of him.'

There was a stock of common-sense underlying Dinah's stolidity that the family had already found helpful in emergencies. Mrs. Thirkettle let her daughter set her like a child in a chair, while she collected for her a few articles and made them into a bundle. Then Dinah dressed her mother in her Sunday bonnet and shawl. By this time the farm lad had finished milking, and Dinah bade him harness the pony in the gig and drive the missus to Stonebridge. When she had seen the poor dazed woman into the gig, she went into the kitchen to prepare the farmer's tea. Nothing that happened ever could put Dinah's mechanism out of order.

Stonebridge is a little old-fashioned town on the steep slope of a hill above a tidal river. The red roofs cluster thickly and irregularly to the left of the market-place and of the stately church, with its quiet graveyard and honey-scented lime avenue down to the river, that is sometimes a broad river of lucent silver water winding between the low hills, and sometimes a waste of brown mud and weed that takes beautiful ripe shades of russet and purple when the sun shines. The town is a little antiquated place, full of vague traditions of past glories. There is a market, chiefly of pigs, every Thursday, which still keeps the town alive. Markets are the one occasion upon which lonely country folk, dwelling in remote corners of a country intersected by the sea, can meet and be in touch for a moment with the outer world. Then the weekly store of groceries is bought ; and then, too, the women see the 'fashions' in the shops, spend-

ing hours of indecision over the purchase of a print gown, fingering the stuffs cunningly with their heads on one side and an air of suspicion pervading their persons, and finally parting with the cherished shillings with a sigh, counting out deliberately the sixpences, the threepenny bits, and the halfpence from unwieldy leather purses, with hands encased in big black thread gloves that stick out half an inch or more beyond the thick work-a-day fingers. Mrs. Thirkettle's bachelor brother was a linendraper, whose little shop fronted the market-place. The small dingy kitchen and living-room where she now spent most of her time looked over the graveyard, away to the meadows and the big trees where the rooks built every spring, but it seemed to Mrs. Thirkettle as though the town hemmed her in and suffocated her. The poor woman lived on as if in a nightmare. Curses and blessings are not what they were to the world in general. But in quiet country places, and above all in simple hearts, the faith in them lives on, and to this day works their fulfilment in a way that is almost miraculous. Ursula felt as the excommunicated in the Middle Ages must have felt—banned, exiled, a leper.

Mrs. Thirkettle suffered keenly from home-sickness. 'Stonebridge is rare and fine,' she would say apologetically to her brother, 'but that isn't my native.' The cry of her heart was for her 'native,' for the long clay ridge, the forlorn moated farm, and the familiar kitchen that was for her the centre of the earth. Her cheeks grew hollow and her eyes as wistful as those of a dog; she was, as she said, 'kind o' poining for her native.'

One September evening the longing for home became so strong that after she had washed up the tea-things she slipped out of the house and walked along the winding road towards Ash Soham. It had been a lovely day, and she had imagined, with a vividness that seemed to strike anguish through her heart, the harvesting, the hot sun on the level fields, the rhythmic swish of the long scythes, and the regular swing forward of the line of reapers. The sun had

gone down, and had taken with it all the warmth of the day. It was chilly; there was an autumnal twang in the air. The yellowing grass was wet with heavy dew. A golden moon was rising over the tops of the black trees in the serene sky; it rode up the pure blue space beyond the dark rim of the earth, like some great lucent ball. Far away in Bucklesham Thicks an owl was hooting—a long, melancholy wail that made Mrs. Thirkettle's heart stand still for an instant with terror. Against her will her memory called up all the tales she had heard, and in which, as a Strict-and-Particular Baptist, she had felt it a matter of religion to disbelieve—at least by daylight. There was the 'Queen o' Hell' at Aye: a wicked woman, Madam Muckinger by name, dead these forty years, who still walks the lanes at night, and sits grinning at you on a bank until your blood runs backward in your body. There was the funeral procession of some great earl—Earl Bygot of Norfolk, an antiquarian would have told her—that passes across the bare heath and along the narrow lane below Stonebridge: shadowy coaches, headless men and horses, and a great plumed hearse. And there was Shuck, who haunts many parishes in East Anglia, with his rough coat and great saucer eyes that glow like fire. If you touch him he bites you to the bone—you will bear his mark to your dying day. A woman going from Stonebridge to Shottisburgh had once met him, and she had only had the strength to creep home to her cottage, where she had died that night from terror.

But Ursula went on desperately along the lonely roads; she felt she must see the Moat Farm once more, or the longing for it would kill her. She met at long intervals some belated wayfarer, or saw some friendly light in a cottage window which told her that she was still within reach of human hands and sound of human voices.

As she drew near the farm, her heart beat so wildly that she could scarcely draw her breath. Great tears, tears of unspeakable love, gathered in her eyes and rolled down her hollow cheeks. This was her 'native,' this was home.

Everything was very still, so still that she could hear the cows browsing in the meadow. She crept up to the house, and leant against the frame of the kitchen window. It was closed and the shutter was barred, but she seemed to see through it into the familiar room ; the dresser with the blue plates and cups, and the two gilt-edged saucers to the right ; the big oak table and the bench which had one leg shorter than the other three, and had to be propped up by a brick. She suddenly stooped down and pressed her poor trembling lips against the sill in a long kiss. Then she went slowly away, turning at the gate for a last look. The moon was flooding the grim old moated homestead with light ; the black trees stood out in heavy masses against the sky. Far away—a sound never heard by day—Ash Soham Church clock jarred, like a man clearing his throat, and then struck eleven. It was nearly one before the tired woman crept back through the empty streets of Stonebridge.

Three years drifted by. Jewsuf reappeared from time to time, but his father refused to receive him, and the young man lived upon his uncle's charity as long as he could, and then went off again in search of work. He had gone rapidly down hill physically and morally. He was only a terror now to his mother, never a joy.

One bitter ice-bound Christmas Eve an old labourer came to see Mrs. Thirkettle. He had been sent in to Stonebridge to fetch the doctor. Bethuel Thirkettle had been ailing the week before with a chill. He was getting better, and had gone about his work again. A bleak east wind had blown all day, and the farmer had come in perished with cold. That night he was taken dangerously ill. He refused to see the doctor ; but at length Dinah had sent the old labourer to fetch him. The old man had come unbidden to warn his former mistress. He believed that his master would not recover. In agricultural districts we quickly think the worst. The hopeful view of any question is not the apparent one. The reasons for this habit of mind would be worthy of examination. Some of them, I think, might

be very sad, telling of hard times and a cheerless struggle for bare existence. Mrs. Thirkettle hurriedly took her seat by the old man in the gig. The Stonebridge bells were ringing out peace and goodwill towards men, and from other villages and hamlets wrapped in darkness, some far away on the bleak heath, came the sound of bells. The high wind had fallen. At any moment now the snow from the heavy clouds might fall. The roads were a sheet of ice, and the old pony crept painfully along between the black hedges. Mrs. Thirkettle dared not hope that her husband would loose her from his curse; yet her whole heart went out to him in tenderness, and in a longing that seemed a physical pain—that stabbed like a knife and burnt like a fire. When they reached the Moat Farm they found that the doctor had been and gone. Thirkettle was still alive, but the doctor did not expect him to live until morning. He died just as the night was giving way to the new day, snow-laden, ice chill, with lowering clouds of dirty yellow, that broke as the cold hours crept on, and fell in large white flakes upon the desolate country.

On the day after Christmas Day the clergyman of Bocking called, hearing that there had been a death in the house. He was a newcomer, and the slow Suffolk ways were strange to him. Something of Mrs. Thirkettle's history had reached him, but when he was told that she was at the Moat Farm he hoped there had been a reconciliation. Dinah received him in the dim living-room, where the blinds excluded the little daylight there was. She took him upstairs after the country fashion to show him the corpse. Thirkettle's face looked stern and set; the dignity and severity of the features that were now like a yellowish waxen mask were those of some mighty lawgiver; you would have scarcely thought that this was the dead face of a small farmer who had lived all his life in a little narrow world. But in death the lineaments of some Puritan ancestor came out in him strongly. The heavy, coarsely-bound family Bible lay upon his breast; his hands, from which

Death had taken away all the marks of toil, all the ingrained soils and wrinkles, lay folded below the Book.

The clergyman looked long at the corpse. Then he asked Dinah—

'Your mother came in time to see him alive?'

'Yes, Mr. Arden, she com in time.'

'Did he—did he speak to her?'

'He didn't say nawthin' to her.'

'Perhaps,' the rector went on, 'he didn't know her?'

'He knew her roight enow,' Dinah said deliberately. 'When fah-ther, he see mother a-comin' in, he just hev strength to turn hisself around, and he sot his face agin the wall away from her. He were wholly weak; but there weren't no doubt fah-ther, he knew mother roight enow.'

'PINCH-ME':

THE STORY OF A LITTLE SERVANT-GIRL

THE first time that I ever saw Sally was at a school feast. The children had come at four o'clock with bands and flags flying, and had feasted and drunk deep of syrupy tea. Then they had run races, and swung in merry-go-rounds until seven, when the long shadows began to creep over the lawns, and the grass was wet with the September dew. Virtuous amusements were beginning to pall upon them. I came upon an awestruck but admiring crowd of infants gathered round a little girl of about four years old, dressed in a tattered, soiled print frock, with a shapeless straw hat on the back of her head. This young desperado had stood upon her mug and thumped it to see if it would break—which the thing had done at once with the most obliging promptitude. 'Sally, your mother-in-law [*i.e.* stepmother] *will* be angry!' said one of the elder girls. 'She'll whip you.' But Sally only laughed. She did not care—just then, at all events.

It was with a sigh of relief that we finally lifted into the great red and blue waggons the hordes of children, overflowing as they were with farewell slices of bread and jam, their features so obliterated with cake and butter and stickiness of all kinds that they were hard to recognise. For three days after the treat we, the entertainers, still ached all over as though we had been beaten with sticks, so actively did we take our amusement. 'What is this thing,' says

Socrates, 'that men call pleasure?' and scratched his leg, much perhaps as I did mine, for the children left behind them fleas, fairy visitants, as living mementoes of the feast. When we came to compare our experiences, we found that each of us had a story of Sally to tell—chiefly, it must be owned, of her naughtiness.

Two years later I happened to be calling at the village dressmaker's. I was shown into the little neat stuffy parlour at the back, that looked on a wilderness of garden where currant and gooseberry bushes, marigolds, blue corn-flowers, and sweet peas grew together in a pleasant tangle. Here I found a kind cottage-woman, who had brought two little motherless girls—the children of a dead neighbour—to be measured for their mourning. They had cried their poor little eyes red earlier in the day, but were now pleased at the thought of new frocks; while Miss Cadge, with her mouth as full of pins as if she were measuring any grown-up person, was laboriously toiling round their small persons with a great yellow tape. 'To be ready by Friday,' she was saying. 'I shall make them quite plain, and I shall put the pockets on the outside, as they are wore now.' Whereupon the youngest of the children plucked up courage, and said, in a beseeching tone: '*Please* may we have the pockets made inside, else, when we go to chapel and sit with the other children, Sally Goodyear steals our sweets. She does it reg'lar.'

Sally enjoyed a great but evil fame. She it was who joined the Church Sunday-school a few Sundays before the annual tea, hoping to qualify herself for that entertainment, and, being put on the front bench exactly opposite the pulpit, made faces at the Rector during the whole of his sermon (Sally's grimaces were uglier than any others; they made dogs howl). Nor when she returned to her native chapel—with an eye to the chapel treat—was she considered any ornament to it. Instead of joining in the hymn in an orthodox manner, being unable to read, and not knowing

the verses by heart, Sally set familiar words to the music, and sang in a piercingly shrill voice :

'Adam and Eve and Pinch-me
Went to the Cut to bathe;
Adam and Eve got drownded,
And who do you think got saved?'

—which, although it contains Scriptural allusions, is not a piece of sacred poetry. After that the children called her 'Pinch-me.'

When Sally was fourteen she went out into service as one of those nondescript little drudges called general servants. She had grown into a tall girl, with bright cheeks, blue-grey eyes, and a mop of tow-coloured hair. Hers was a hard place, but she relieved the tedium of her work by some little devices of her own. She ate up, at a sitting, the contents of a sugar-basin, and filled it up again with salt. She gave half a suet-pudding to a hungry dog—not much hungrier, perhaps, than herself—and tastefully arranged some putty in its stead. She did not stay long in her first place. Her second suited her better. A tradesman's wife, a Mrs. Dowsall, took her as nurserymaid to her two little children. Sally was fond of children. She taught them every mischievous trick she knew, and this naturally endeared her to them. Sally was always being scolded by her mistress, always on the eve of being dismissed, and yet somehow escaping that final doom. She had now no home to go to; her father was dead, and 'mother-in-law' refused to have anything more to do with her. But fears for the future were the last things to trouble Sally ; the present was all she cared about.

It was not a long walk along the dusty roads from the little town to the lanes and meadows, and Sally and her charges spent long summer days in making mud-pies and in scratching up pig-nuts, in tearing their clothes in the hedges, and in blackening their mouths with blackberries. There was that year a long late autumn, during which Sally and the children wandered through the dry stubble-fields, where

troops of little pigs were feeding, kept by some little sunburnt boy with a long switch in his hand; the still autumnal air would be sweet with the smoke of burning weeds, and shining threads and silky thistledown floated here and there, brushing against the children's faces. Or they would trespass in the yellowing hazel-copses, where they gathered nuts that Sally cracked recklessly for the whole party with her teeth; and sitting down under some bush they would listen to the solemn mysterious noise of the leaves, and of the ripe acorns and chestnuts falling to the ground.

It was about this time that Sally discovered the joys of reading. There were not many books that came in her way, and those that did were chiefly penny dreadfuls; upon these, and upon sweets, which she generously shared with the children, Sally spent her small wages, to the total neglect of her wardrobe. If she could, she laid hold of her mistress's books, and left therein her mark—traces of the blackened human thumb, and smudges at corners of the pages, showing how religiously she had licked her forefinger, which, with the superstition of her race, she believed was a necessity in turning over.

Mrs. Dowsall's parents lived in a distant county, and it was settled that winter that Sally should take the children on a visit to them. It was a long journey, but there were no changes by the way, and one bitterly cold snowy morning Mrs. Dowsall put Sally and the two little ones into a third-class railway carriage. Sally's mistress had a rooted conviction that it was necessary to speak 'very sharp' to her little servants, and to let them see that she 'would stand no nonsense.' Therefore it was with many dark hints and menaces, enforced by a good poke with an umbrella, that Sally was sent forth on her journey. But her spirits were not long depressed: directly the train started she and the children took out the luncheon-basket, and, disregarding the hour of day (which happened to be nine o'clock, and directly after their breakfast), they devoured then and there the contents, leaving only an uninteresting crust or two. The

snow fell monotonously, and it was piercingly cold. The children were warmly clad, and were provided with a good thick shawl. Sally's stuff dress was thin and worn, and her little cloth jacket had more cotton than wool in it. She wrapped the little ones up in the shawl, and cuddled them as she best could, and the three fell asleep. They were awakened by the stopping of the train, and by sounds of agitated voices. Sally put her head out of the window. The train was blocked by snow in a cutting. On either side stretched a great white expanse; there was not a house to be seen. 'We are on the moor,' some passenger said. It was agreed that nothing better could be done by the women and children than to stay where they were, and to wait until help was brought to them. Help did not come until the morning. All through the long winter night Sally bravely tended the two hungry, wailing children. There were only two crusts of bread left, but she gave both of them to the little ones. In spite of the warm shawl they still cried piteously with the cold. Then Sally took off her jacket and covered the youngest with it. 'You'll catch your death, my dear,' said a goodnatured old man in the same carriage. But he had nothing to offer her, being himself without a great-coat.

When Sally and the children reached their journey's end, the children were little the worse for the adventure. But Sally was so ill with what afterwards proved to be rheumatic fever that her life was despaired of. The poor girl did not die. That is the pathetic part of her story. She lived to be racked with rheumatism, and a prey to a heart-disease 'that might carry her off any day,' the doctor said. Mrs. Dowsall's gratitude was quite exhausted by the expenses of the long illness. Sally was homeless, and there remained nothing for her but the workhouse. This is a great red-brick pile, built above a chalkpit, with lonely, wide-spreading fields all round—a dreary place, with barred windows and great whitewashed wards. In one of these Sally lives, white with the startling pallor that often goes

with heart-complaint, crippled so that she cannot use her hands—a poor caged bird. But she still can make herself of use in the nursery. 'Sing about Pinch-me,' the little children cry, and Sally obeys. There is a mistake somewhere in the verse. In the shipwreck of life it was Adam and Eve that were saved—and poor Pinch-me, after all, that came to grief.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT

It was a week or two before Christmas, and the day was fine and keen and bright, the roads hard and clean, and a cold blue sky overhead. I was making my Christmas preparations, and Mrs. Handy, who is the old charwoman who pays us a weekly visitation, and goes home after tea, was following me about with her head on one side like an elderly magpie, peering over my shoulder into cupboards and drawers. For she knew that somewhere a present for her was secreted, until the great day should arrive. It has always seemed to me a great waste, the way in which we heap presents on those who do not want them, when there are people like Mrs. Handy, for instance, who are as fresh and unspoilt in their appreciation of gifts as a National school-child. Sixpence goes so far in buying a street Arab buns, but such a little way towards buying diamonds for a Duchess, and yet so many of us prefer spending our sixpence on the diamonds. However, there it was, a ginger-coloured woollen gown, of the shade she most admired, swathed in tissue paper, within three inches of her, but veiled from her gaze so that it might come upon her unawares in all its dazzling splendour on Christmas Day. But we little thought of the tribulation and of the vale of tears that were to be passed through before that day.

The men were shooting, and Mr. Handy, an extremely deaf, but, as his fellow-villagers remarked, 'a very tractable' old man, was in charge of a little cart of provisions, drawn by a white and woolly donkey. All had gone well until the

return journey, which was effected by Mr. Handy and the donkey *tête-à-tête*. At the end of it the donkey was found straying across the lawn towards the house door, and Mr. Handy following it with an uncertain and serpentine motion. A bottle of sherry had been emptied, miraculously, as Mr. Handy gave us afterwards to understand, during a brief fainting fit on his part. The discovery came like a thunder-clap. It was useless to attempt any reproof then. When Mr. Handy arrived on the following morning several vain attempts were made to reprove him sternly, and to show him the error of his ways, but his deafness had apparently increased to such an alarming degree that it was impossible to make him understand a syllable of the eloquent appeal we had composed for his benefit. He, however, divined somehow that he was to be no longer employed, and went his way. This severe measure was intended to strike awe, and excite remorse in him, which could eventually lead to pardon and reinstation in his office, which consisted chiefly in meandering about the shrubbery with a broom, and in drinking hot soup in the kitchen at intervals. But no! whenever we met him in our walks abroad this graceless old man had the same cheerful grin and chirrupy way with him which we had always known, until, in a day or two, he retired for a time from the scene; in bed with lumbago, which I am told was not an unnatural consequence of an entire bottle of sherry. He was considered to be under too dark a cloud to receive his Christmas gift. Soup and potions were still accorded him, but they were to be considered as testimonials to his lumbago, not to his intrinsic worth. The great day arrived, and Mrs. Handy was presented with her ginger gown; but to her the radiancy of it was dimmed. It was indeed beautiful beyond all human imagination; but her 'poor old fellow,' as she called him, was in disgrace, and there could be no joy for her.

THE KITCHEN AT THE HALL

THE pleasantest room in the house in this snowy weather is the kitchen. It is an old-fashioned farmhouse kitchen with a brick floor, a beautiful oak dresser, and lattice windows with curious old fastenings. It is a centre of news; the village people come up on some errand, and then, while they warm themselves at the great glowing fire, they give the latest news. There is an old woman now, a pretty old woman of eighty-two, dressed in patches and remnants of gowns sewn neatly together, who is giving a Zola-esque account of the way in which the neighbour who nursed her through the influenza cleaned her forks and knives. It appears that the human tongue performed many offices that we delegate to mere soap and water. The old lady, however, has not come simply to relate her experiences, but to ask the cook's advice as to where she should bury her husband, 'her poor old fellow,' as she calls him. He wants to be buried in the chapel burying-ground, but that is such a long way off, and bearers are expensive. The 'poor old fellow' is in his usual health, and no older than herself; but, as she says, 'it is well to think on such things beforehand.'

The cook is supposed in the village to give extraordinarily good advice. On the present occasion the oracle is very busy with various pots and pans, and it is some time before the answer is given. When it does come, it is very simple: 'I should wait until he is dead.'

Mrs. Joy and her husband are both, as they express it,

'on their eighty-two.' He is a little dried-up man whose brown face might have been cut out of wood. They were both very ill with influenza some weeks ago, and I was once hurriedly summoned to their cottage; the one and only bed of the establishment had given way beneath them. In the bit of bed that still remained upright the old lady was tossing, delirious, talking ceaselessly, as indeed is her habit in health, but now her talk was of old forgotten things. Propped up on the broken part the poor old man (dressed in his usual clothes, like a weary old scarecrow, with a red pocket handkerchief tied round his deal-coloured face, surmounted by an old battered hat) was groaning and begging 'the Lord to make haste and take him.' (It seems always so delightful and so easy to play the part of Providence; it is only after long experience that you realise how difficult it is.) One of our beds was at once dispatched to our poor old neighbours, and I thought that the emergency was dealt with. But no! nothing would induce Mr. Joy to lie upon it; he declared that it pricked him, and no eloquence could persuade him that it did not. A friendly neighbour thought that later he might think better of the bed. In the evening I sent down a little messenger to inquire how matters stood. There is a little boy who on Saturdays comes up to the kitchen; and, robed in a long creamy pinafore that covers him from head to foot, he washes vegetables, and shares the dinner afterwards that he has helped to prepare. He has beautiful dark eyes set in a grimy little face, and his murky little claws have that look of hardened, ingrained dirt which is habitual to the young. This was my messenger. He did not return quite as early as a hopeful person might expect, but I knew that a short mile may often take a curiously long time when marbles have to be played with on the way. At the end of some time, however, he appeared with the polite message: 'If you please, Miss, Mr. Joy, he say he would rather sleep as he have afore.'

Reveries

OR

Grown-up Fairy Tales

DEDICATION OF THE STORIES

I dedicate these Stories to the Memory of a Home which like the Garden of Eden was taken by the four corners and drawn up into Heaven; where I trust, purified by fire, and spiritualised by many tears and prayers, it awaits the coming of the Children whom it tenderly sheltered on earth.

C. G.

THE HUMAN ENVELOPE

ONCE upon a time a very beautiful soul inhabited a human envelope that had grown ragged and torn. Through the tatters and chinks you could see the lovely soul shining, transfiguring its house of clay, and revealing the unspeakable strength and majesty of spiritual things. But at last Death wished to take away the poor envelope. He is always taking his worn-out material and working it up into new things; as it were, shaking his great kaleidoscope, which—like our little ones—always contains the same elements but never twice in the same combination. We call him Death. But I suspect that his real name is Life. The end of each of his stories is the beginning of another. Now, he wanted to write *Finis* across this poor human envelope, so that he might begin a new tale with it below ground, a romance of transformation; while for the lovely human soul a new tale would begin in a new place, of which we know a little through dreams and visions, and, it may be, also through the home-sickness we have for it at times.

So Death sent his messengers. Suffering was one; and Death and Suffering so changed and distorted the poor human envelope, that I, who had known and loved it dearly in its old days of health and strength, scarcely recognised it when I saw it lying cast off and empty. We smoothed and laid it out very tenderly, and put great boughs of white cherry-blossom on the bed; and the school-children brought fading primroses and pale blue dog-violets in their hot, puggy little hands, to place in the cold white ones that had always

been so ready to do them kindness. But in spite of the cherry-blossom, and in spite of the primroses and violets, the poor dead face looked so worn and sad that I could not bear to look at it. For when you saw the wasted features, and the tired hands folded on the motionless breast, you divined in a flash of unspeakable pity all the weariness and the suffering that both body and spirit had passed through before they had reached this rest; and it wrung your heart to read the lines that pain had written about the closed eyes that once had so sweet a look of happiness in them, and round the dear mouth that once had worn so gay a smile.

Long after we had laid the poor human envelope in the earth did the memory of that sad face haunt me. I could never think of her otherwise than as I had last seen her, when the men came to close the coffin-lid over her. 'Sweet it is to see our Beloved by night, whene'er such things may be,' says poor Admetus. But when my best-beloved came to visit me by night in dreams, it was with that tired white face and closed eyes, and with the story of past anguish written on her brow—never as I had known her in the old days, when we as two little sisters wandered through the honeysuckle lanes, and heard the larks singing clearly, high above the windy uplands. And in my thoughts the dead middle-aged face had blotted out the happy childish one. I could never remember how she looked in those far-off years before life had become a burden.

One spring morning, after a night of troubled dreams, through which the sad dead face had come and gone, I rose very early and went into the cathedral of the little town where I was staying—a little walled city perched upon a peak of sun-burnt wind-swept Umbria. The great bare church had here and there a faded, tarnished fresco on the walls. There were peasant women and burgesses kneeling devoutly before the altars. The fierce hot scirocco was beating against the windows, banging the doors, and torturing the dusty roads and terraced vineyards, but here it might not enter; here there was sanctuary. The calm crept over

me like the waves of a great sea of peace. And then, looking up as a crowd of peasant women passed me, I saw among them for one minute, for one blessed minute, the form and face of my best-beloved as I had known her in the bygone years, fresh as a branch of apple-blossom in May, and with the sunshine in her eyes and hair.

So the image of her old self has come again to me. And now she visits me by night 'whene'er such things may be,' wearing the loveliness of youth and health once more; and to my heart has been given back the one joy that yet remains when all others are dead and gone—the possession of the inviolate past.

A LETTER FROM A DESERTED HOUSE

. . . 'A lovely keen day with a clear, rather cold sky, and a red sunset that is now fading away behind the tall trees that fringe the garden. Can you see it all—the light through the crescent-shaped window on the stone stairs; the shimmer of the red, and the tranquil peace of the grey in the twilight sky; the cloud of starlings flying, twittering and chattering, home just as we children used to run indoors of an evening; the auburn beeches and the canary-coloured elms, and the soft mist floating up the valley? Can you hear it all—the distant start of a pheasant in the copse; the far-off tinkle of sheep-bells on the common; the quacking of the water-fowl on the reedy river; the shrill, ear-achy cry of the little restless bats; the dull boom of a passing train? All the things that you and I have seen and heard together so many years, and which are now but the ghosts of their former selves. Come and sit a while on the brown stairs with me in spirit. There is a hush through the house, which is growing weird and dark, and the old clock, which used to live on the mantelshelf of a room that has been long since closed, is talking to itself all alone (like Dr. Johnson) at the foot of the stairs: talking of bygones—of a house which was once full of fair-haired children, full of the patter of feet and the laughter of childish voices, and of boyish and girlish fun; talking of a house that is very still and silent now, a great tomb of old-fashioned thoughts.

'Do you remember (Professor Hughes says that "all the nicest stories in life begin with 'do you remember'") the

story of Harry's and George's rabbits—how Harry's rabbit got out of its hutch and disappeared for a week, and at last crept home without its tail to die? and how, when Harry cried bitterly over his dead tailless rabbit, George tried to comfort him: "Don't cry, Harry dear; don't cry. It's only the body you see! The tail has gone to Heaven"? So now it seems to me the body of things remains, but the tail—the romance, the glory, the youth of them—is gone to Heaven. Never can there be again in life that freshness of May-dew which belongs to the early years. The splendid visions and the dreams that were sweet, past all telling, have spread their lovely wings and flown away. We have realities now for companions instead of imaginations. In those days thought was winged, and divine possibilities hovered round us. Saints and heroes, angels and fairies, lived upon this earth. Now they have all turned into the merest men and women. We ourselves seemed capable of so much. I think I can see the old schoolroom now—and Rose, in her white pinafore, getting out her manuscript books with: "I make it *a rule* to write poetry for an hour every evening after tea." It was a tragedy, I remember, called "Semiramis," and began: "Blood! Blood! Blood! It droppeth drip by drip."

'Not life itself is changed, but the eyes with which we look at life. Early summer mornings are those I recall, when the lilacs were in bud and the cuckoo "a-holloa-ing" through the park (as Mrs. Gyatt used to say), and a radiant freshness in the air. The meadows were full of cowslips, and the chalk streams alive with swift-darting trout; wood-pigeons were cooing in the fragrant trees, and in the copse nightingales were trilling and calling with those dear human voices of theirs that are brimming over with passion and hope and despair. It is the same here now every spring, I suppose; but the fancies and the lovely phantoms are gone, and the people whom they visited walk those woods and fields no more.

'Youth lasts as long as imagination stays; and with

most people that must go sooner or later; very few keep the heart of a child to the end. Napoleon said his imagination died at the siege of Acre. I know where mine died—and the exact square of faded carpet in the little dingy room where it dropped down, poor thing, pierced by a reality to the very centre of its foolish heart. And when we come to the death of youth and imagination in anybody's life, then we come to the end of the first—and prettiest—act of the drama. No matter how it ends; whether the curtain falls on a bridal-benedictory scene, or on a death-bed, or whether, indeed, the curtain comes aimlessly down in the middle of nothing in particular—whenever, however it is, it is an end. And oh! the sadness of Ends, and the dreariness of Beginnings! It is like getting out of one's warm bed on cold candle-light mornings, and going away in the bleak chilblainy air. "Good-bye, Illusions!" "Good-bye, Fancies!" "One more kiss, Boojum, and then good-bye!" And then into the dingy one-horse fly of reality, which one had thought would be a chariot and four, and that now one knows is nothing but the little yellow omnibus, or at best the White Hart fly. Once I was: ἴση θεοῖσι πλὴν τὸ κατθανεῖν μόνον—like to the gods save for my mortality; and of a sudden: νῦν δ' εἰμὶ δούλη—a slave to dull ugly fact, that clips our wings and leaves us nothing but common legs to walk on.'

THE MOTHER OF LOVE

ONCE upon a time there was a pretty little marble Venus. She was not beautiful, nor majestic, nor even human, for she had been sculptured in the later days of Art, and her maker had only had it in him to give her a sweet insipid face that cloyed upon you, and delicate, graceful limbs. For when she was formed the sacred fire had died out, or had been caught up again to heaven. It is that fire alone, which a god brought down to starving ice-bound men, and consecrated by his sufferings, that can give life to art or song. In a flash it kindles the poor dumb clay, or the dull human words, and it makes the hearts beat and the blood run swiftly through the veins of all who see or hear the masterpiece for a thousand thousand years. But there come times when this living fire is no longer to be found on earth, and men freeze again ; and then cunning makers, in lack of the better thing, mould pretty, pleasing forms and make dainty musical verse, but their creations cannot live, for there is no spirit in them.

It was in such days as those that the little Venus was carved in pure white marble, and that she was carried to the stately temples of orange sandstone that crown the windy heights above the shining purple sea. Here it was that the people worshipped her ; a pleasant worship, with music and singing, with garlands of sweet violets and curled parsley, and dances of young men and girls, whose lithe brown feet moved swiftly in rhythm. 'The Mother of Love' they called her ; and there was a little naked boy in marble

beside her, whom they said was her son—a child with a face as sweet and as meaningless as her own. Surely he was not the god Love, the unknown Eros, who is stronger than Fate, but only the pretty mischievous Cupid shooting at random his wanton darts. The little Venus smiled upon her suppliants, dealing out the same smile to all—and she felt a thrill of pleasure and vanity through her little stony heart.

But a day came when the earth yawned, and the temples were rocked and shaken in their foundations. The little Venus fell from her pedestal and lay hidden deep in the ground, and there she slept for many a century, with the placid smile still upon her lips. Hundreds of springs, year by year, awoke the sleepy earth. Keen stirring winds blew over the radiant Sicilian seas and called up the little purple iris, the starry anemone, and the pale mauve crocus from the places where they rested through the winter, folded in their brown roots underground. Tall spikes of asphodel—sad white flowers veined with dull pink, that creep slowly up their long stem—covered the stony hills, and milky almond trees filled the rounded hollows. The brown herdsmen led their tinkling flocks through the narrow lanes between the broken stone walls to the springing pastures; and the creatures followed them, bleating and licking their masters' hands; lean shaggy beasts, with bright liquid eyes, greedy for the taste of the sweet young herbage. In the yellow sandstone wall of the street of tombs the delicate maidenhair hung out pale fronds of tender green, and through the broken crevices fruit-trees pushed their twisted boles and fragrant boughs covered with a flush of rosy blossom. Over all these the March wind fluttered sighing, with a refrain of the old human songs of spring, that speak of the swallows flying home after the winter, and of the resurrection of the dead earth, when all things live again. Only the men, say the songs, only the men who are gone, only those whom we loved better than life itself, come again no more; and the passion of that cry, the bitter cry of

love impotent before death, haunts the air of spring and echoes in men's hearts through all the human generations.

The winter rains had loosened the earth, and the roots of the locust trees by the ruined temples had given way. One morning the little Venus found the sun shining once more upon her, and the birds were skimming through the bright air over her head. Her shrines lay broken and desolate, but from the height where the little town was perched came the sound of bells, and as the goddess gazed around her she saw a procession winding down the hill and banners gleaming in the sun.

'It is the bands of young men and maidens,' she thought, 'who are coming to worship me once more.'

But as the procession drew near she saw that the men had not flowing locks but shaven heads, and she heard sad music and slow hoarse chaunts.

'Are they bewailing Adonis—Adonis my lover, whom the wild boar slew?' she wondered. And then she saw that they bore, rudely carved in wood, the form of a woman, her face blurred with tears, and worn with grief unspeakable, supporting the body of a dead man. What was that they sang? They called that poor suffering woman the Mother of Love. Were these Gods? As the little Venus wondered, a shepherd, who followed in the procession, saw the cleft ground, and, looking in, found her. That night he took her to the priests, who thought her beautiful enough to be a Madonna. So they dressed her white limbs in rich brocades and fine needlework, and put a carved infant in her arms and then set her in a high niche above the altar. They chaunted Latin and swung incense before her. On the stone steps beneath her, women often knelt and prayed for hours, sometimes with sobs and bitter tears. But the little Venus could not understand their prayers. They asked for things—spiritual things—of which she knew nothing; with which, had she known them, she would certainly have had no sympathy. It all bored her—the trailing garments in which her pretty limbs were swathed, and the carved baby;

the poor earnest human creatures with their agonies of despair and their waves of hope ; and the mistake they all made in thinking she ever had any virtues, or wished anybody else to have any.

One night the Venus had a vision. It was burning summer weather. The sullen, heavy sun hung over the island day after day. There was not a breath of air. The sea trembled like molten glass in a great cauldron. All the creatures crept silently away into the shade of the rocks or of the fig trees. Only the cicadas chirped on, unchanging and unceasing. One night, just as the orange dawn was beginning to edge the eastern horizon with rich-coloured light, and the deep purple of the hills stood out against the kindling sky, the Venus from her high niche saw through the window opposite her two strangers enter the city. One was draped in dark shadowy robes, with a scythe on his shoulder, and with the face that we all know, not cruel or revengeful, but inhuman in its expression of fixity of purpose. The other figure was in white, with a shining countenance, yet with a sad smile upon his lips, knowing, perhaps, that his gift of Life might be a heavier visitation than his companion's scythe. They walked slowly through the silent streets of the dreaming city, and as they went one or other touched the doors of every house. But the stranger with the shining face touched very few. Then they passed through the northern gate and were gone ; and the hot sun rose and beat upon the dry, thirsty country. That day, and for many days after, there was misery in the town. The plague had come. People fell down dead in the streets, and on the steps of the altar. Women came sobbing and heart-broken to pray to the little false Madonna, who recoiled from them in disgust. They besought her in the name of Love to have pity on them and on their dear ones. What had Love, thought the little Venus, to do with loathsome sick and dying folk ? Love was graceful, beautiful, and, above all, healthy. What religion was this that worshipped a suffering, dying God, and called upon Love to

minister to revolting disease? And she dreamt of Love as she knew him; her boy whom she had borne without any pain (she was not human enough even for that), who mischievously shot his pretty darts, and flew overhead with his little company of bird-like children, fluttering among the blossoming boughs; songs and kisses and sweet trifling by the cool watercourses, or in the lavender-scented folds of the hills, where you may lie in the shade and look at the sunshine, and hear the unceasing beat of the summer sea—such were the gifts of Love as she knew him. But she shrank from this terrible, pierced, suffering Love, who held out dying arms to the squalid, toiling people. The priests carried her one day in solemn procession through the stricken city, and her pretty, insipid, smiling face was lifted above men and women in their death agony, as they called for mercy and pity to the graceful marble figure. The streets were full of distorted forms and putrefying corpses. Surely, the little Venus thought again, Love could have no part with such as these. But there were some who went out in the name of Love to bury the dead and to minister to the dying, nor feared any evil, since, they said, Love upheld them. For once having tasted the divine draught of Love, all the disgust of life was gone for ever from them; Love had purified the world, and for them nothing was unclean. They could walk unsoiled among all the filth and squalor, if only they might tread in the footprints of Love, who, like them, had worn the poor human dress.

The thread of the story of the little Venus is so torn and tangled that it becomes lost in the labyrinth of human lives, and I know no more of it. But she stands now in a stately English house, in a long, high room overlooking a broad river, where all the summer through the swallows swing to and fro in the teeming air. When the light fades in a splendid glow behind the grave Scotch firs, and the darkening space is full of the vague scent of magnolia and jasmine, the last tender ray falls on the white limbs of the little Venus. She has still that insipid smile upon her

face—it has been there for two thousand years—as she looks down upon the struggling human folk who are always seeking for Love, knowing that life is not worth having without it, but many times never finding what they seek. They have cried for the unknown Eros these many hundred years. Who among them all has found a perfect love on earth? There always comes either 'Love's sad satiety,' or else a parting with piteous tears and unavailing arms outstretched across the dark gulf on one side, and silence, heart-breaking, inhuman silence, and that cold, dead smile on the other. But yet—and yet—and yet Love springs and rises from the dead though he have died a hundred times, and he comes again to poor human folk and brings the brightness and the glamour of his shining wings to the squalor and the weariness and the degradation of life.

THE COMPANIONSHIP OF EVIL

ONCE upon a time a husband and wife lived in a little old house in the heart of a great wilderness. On one side stretched an open moor of bog and heather, and on the other beech woods and a forest of Scotch fir. The house was rambling, here a step and there a step, where you least expected it. The rooms were small and low, with pretty casement windows that looked southward, or towards the rising sun. It was a very old dwelling place, full of the memories of many lives, good and bad. Those little rooms had been the scene of so many tragedies and comedies, of so much love and hate, of so much joy, and of so many blinding heart-breaking sorrows, that the air seemed full of human feeling. The earth is so old now that it has become double-shotted with fate, which repeats itself and repeats itself through all the generations. There are some spots where every inch of ground has been defiled again and again by men's sin, or hallowed by their love and self-sacrifice.

The man was silent, dwelling alone with strange thoughts, in the inmost fortress of his mind; his wife was a bright young woman with a healthy appetite and the gift of sleep. He shrank from life, from its terrible choices and problems which faced him, from the pain and pity of it all; while she found her daily bread very sweet, and daily twaddle quite engrossing. The great world beyond went its course, and seemed to leave untouched and out of mind the lonely waste, and the little old house with its strange memories. Sometimes the young wife felt sorry that she had no baby;

it would make the house so cheerful, she thought. She liked little children, and could not understand her husband when he said that the gift of life was a dangerous one. Yet she never was dull; there was a great deal to be done in a small way, and the procession of the months through the woods and over the heath was to her a never-failing source of interest and pleasure. Now it was autumn, and there were short sweet days and chill nights. The trees were dying lovely deaths, and the woods were full of the rich sad fragrance of fading leaves. Here and there on the moor was still a spray of pale pink bog heather; the whortleberry plants had turned yellow and salmon colour, and above the white stems of the shiny dark hollies, and on the wild-rose bushes, the boughs were covered with scarlet and orange fruit. The air was full of floating cobwebs, and the distance was wrapped in a melting hazy blue. There was not a sound to break the stillness. The little wife sat sewing in the parlour. The man wandered far out into the woods, and when he came to an open space where the brown fern had been cut and piled into heaps, he sat down wearily in the sunshine. A great dragon-fly, with a sparkling blue body and wings that shimmered like the light on water, hovered over a leaf. But the man was in the shade and chill of his own thoughts. His mind was always dwelling on sin; on the manifestations of sin; on the strange, evil powers here, there, and everywhere. He thought and read of nothing else. The papers had always news of sin for him—of cruelty, and murder, and corruption. He would read the story of some poor wretch condemned to death, and he would fancy that he could see how the powers of evil had hemmed him in, had taken possession of his body and soul, hypnotising the will, until the miserable creature awoke with a start to find himself lost irrevocably. Ah! that was sin's favourite jest! Far away on the open moor there was a fire of burning turves. The smoke was rising in a soft blue column from the brown heather. A man was sitting by it. Was he a real man? or only a human envelope, the home of

demons? The earth, he thought, was full of these demons seeking habitations. Though the eyes might be holden, yet they made themselves manifest to the inner senses, knocking, crying, calling for admission. And then a great wave of horrible curiosity to see and know them swept over him, and all of a sudden it seemed to his jarred mind as though, like a cloud between him and the sun, descended shadows that resolved themselves into shapes, horrible beyond all telling. Yet his curiosity mastered his dread. He seemed to have no choice but to look at them.

That was the first time that he beheld them; but, as the days went on, he found that he could evoke these loathsome visions by will. It was needful that he should concentrate his whole being on the thought of them, and then they came, each time more definite, more enthralling. He lived in their company. They possessed his mind. Of an evening, when the little wife would set wide the casements of the upper chamber for a blow of strong keen air, she would call him to admire the beauty of the wild night, the dark clouds riding swiftly up the stormy sky, and the swirling wind flying over the open moor. But he shrank back in horror. For he saw the Seven Deadly Sins and the Figure of Blood striding over the dead heather on their hideous errands. At night, when the little wife was sleeping serenely by his side, her face like the face of a little child, he would lie awake and see the darkness peopled by unknown terrors, tempting him, grinning at him, pressing their faces upon his. Then there would come times of remorse, times in which he longed very piteously to be free from his hideous visitants, and from his own evil thoughts; and one day, in utter misery, he told the poor little woman how, to him, the air was full of these creatures; how they daily grew plainer. 'Soon,' he said, 'they will so palpably attend me that even you will see them.'

When she understood his meaning she was horrified, and her tears moved him to wish more than he had ever done that he had never held intercourse with evil. He bethought

himself in a moment of hope—for his wife's love and tears had melted the icy burthen of despair which lay upon his heart—that all was not, as yet, lost irretrievably, and that if he could only refrain from evoking the spirits for a time, even for seven days, their power over him would be lessened, and his morbid craving for their presence would be spent. But he knew that he could not trust himself alone, and that his wife must not leave him for a moment. There seemed to be a safeguard in her. She was as simple and as white-minded as a little child; all her thoughts were full of love and trust. So the time passed, she watching by him and soothing him, and warding off the powers of darkness by her tenderness and goodness. Thus they reached the seventh day.

All day long it seemed to the man that the creatures he dreaded, yet craved for, were making a supreme effort to hold him. The air seemed dense with them; the thought of them pressed upon his mind, but still he refused to entertain it, and hung like a child upon his wife's simple talk. The day had been chill and dank. A thick white mist clung to the sodden earth, masking the face of it, blotting out the hollies and the leafless beeches. It penetrated into the house and dimmed the brightness of the hearth. The little woman sang at her work, to cheer him; there may have been tears in her eyes the while, but she trilled and lilted as she stitched away, and her fresh sweet voice and her pretty little trivial songs about sweethearts and May mornings seemed to come to his ears through a veil of mist. The dreary day wore on, and the evening dropped down on the quiet lonely house. The man watched the darkening sky and the night brooding like a great bird with black wings that covered everything. The mist clung to the eaves and turned into big drops that fell from time to time with a dull thud on the gravel. The wife tried to make a cheerful chink with the tea-things, but he could neither eat nor drink, and the lights that she lit burnt dim and low, as in a fog. She came and sat on a stool at his feet and rested her inno-

cent curly head against his knee. There seemed protection in her touch——and yet how strong that night were the powers of evil! He felt torn by the craving to speak to them, to look back, like Lot's wife. Then a little hand crept up and nestled in his, and he laid it upon his throbbing, tortured heart, and for a moment it was calmed.

Presently the silence was broken by the sound of knocking at the kitchen door. The wife went to answer it, leaving the parlour door open meanwhile. It was a poorly-dressed woman, who said that she lived in a squatter's hut some five or six miles away; her husband was very ill, and she had come to ask for food and medicine. The man could watch them from where he sat. He could see the woman's face; he knew it at once to be the face of a demon. While his wife was hurrying hither and thither, looking in cupboards and chests for what was needed, the creature made signs to him, grinning and beckoning, and pointing with hideous grimaces to the door. He tried not to look at her, but his will seemed paralysed. Then it was that, with a sense of something like relief, he abandoned the effort of resistance. At any rate, he said to himself, the struggle was over. There was nothing more to be done. He would give himself up to his fate. As if in a dream, he passed noiselessly through the parlour doorway and was gone.

Meanwhile the wife loaded the woman with gifts, and closed the kitchen door behind her. Then she returned to the parlour; but before she had crossed the threshold and had seen the emptiness of the room, her heart had told her that he was gone. She at once guessed whither. There was a long loft that went the whole length of the house. At one end of this loft the man had made a little room, where he kept books and papers and botanical specimens. The place had a morbid attraction for him, because he knew that years ago an old man, a miser, had been found hanging by a rope from the rafters, and it had always seemed to him that the spot was still haunted by the remembrance of a life of greed and

cunning and then a death-agony of despair. The little wife hurried along the dark, damp loft. It seemed to her as though she would never reach the end. The glass door that parted the small room from the rest of the loft was locked, but through it she could see one candle, burning low, and her husband leaning back against his tall writing-desk. He was quite white, and his eyes were fixed with an expression of horror on something beyond—something that she could not see. His hands were hanging powerless at his sides. And then, gazing intently, she saw by degrees a shadowy Thing, void, shapeless, indescribable, which encompassed him, which stood between him and her. She broke the glass and sprang through it, trying with her wounded, bleeding hands to snatch hold of his poor paralysed ones—trying to throw her strong young arms round him. But the Shadow stood between them; she caught at thin air. It was like some horrible nightmare; she strained every nerve, but she could not reach him. She saw his pleading gaze turned upon her; his eyes were dim like the eyes of a dying man; the life seemed to be ebbing out of his face as she looked. And then, with a supreme effort, she threw herself forward: 'Oh, my love, my love!' she cried. 'Oh, my love!' And as she called on the name of Love, and as she sprang, her poor heart bursting, the Shadow parted—faded—vanished; and she put her tender arms, strong with love, around him and raised his drooping head, and recalled, by her kisses and her tears, his poor soul from that dread journey on which it had already gone some way.

For Love is the strongest power of all, the one unchanging thing in all this changing world. And on this earthly pilgrimage of ours, how we go, nor whither, we know not; our paths lie over 'shadowy mountains and far-sounding seas'—but yet 'a certain love shall lead us.'

THE LITTLE DUCHESS

ONCE upon a time there was a little Duchess who lived with the Potentate her father, in a great white palace in the country for half the year, and in a great black palace in the capital for the other half. She was a thin, pale-faced scrap of a Duchess, with a prim, attenuated little figure, and eyes that reminded you of the eyes of innocent, harmless creatures in cages. There was a sense of chilly grandeur about her life; it was very dull and inhuman. She was like the Grand Lama, and might never stir hand or foot in her own behalf. Nothing that belonged to nature was allowed to approach her. There were great stretches of stately park and garden round her country home. You might walk for miles before you could pick a dandelion; and all the little Duchess knew of fields and unkempt hedges was from being driven ponderously by them in a barouche, with a coachman in a wig, and a powdered footman on the box. She had never crossed the threshold of a cottage in her life—the Potentate did not allow it; and he wished her to consider the servants who waited on her as machines—machines that you abstained from overworking, and oiled from time to time. In the capital she was never permitted to set foot upon the pavement, but might only walk in the private garden with her lady in waiting, or drive, also with her lady in waiting, in the quiet part of the public park. Never either in town or country had the little Duchess met unchaperoned the air of heaven. The Potentate gave her beautiful books, and magnificent works of art, and he sent for the great

musicians to come and play to her ; but yet the little Duchess languished, and grew tinier every day. One breath of free air would have been the best medicine for her ; she stifled in the rarefied atmosphere.

She could know nothing, you would think, of the poor toiling human folk beyond her pale. But yet her little starved heart went out to them in love and pity. She knew in her bones that they were her brothers and sisters. She discovered for herself the great human world ; she divined it, and imagined the unknown joys and sorrows, and dreamt of the redeeming love that can break down all the barriers, and understand all the tongues. She would sometimes catch a glimpse of tired women going home after a long day's work, and of ragged little urchins gathering round the broad stone steps of the palace in the capital to see her and the Potentate (a wizened little man with a tabby coloured face) go out to an evening banquet ; and it would seem to the little Duchess as if, at the sight of them, some hidden chord in her thrilled and vibrated till she could have cried with the joy and the pain. They could never know how she loved them, how gladly she would give them all she had. She did, indeed, give them all the money she possessed, through her almoner ; but her poor little hand might never touch their hands ; it must always be 'charity'—from above to below—never the sister who had the goods of this world giving to the brother or sister who stood in need. And then it would come upon her like a despair, like the canker of life, the thought that she was clothed in useless purple and fine linen, while they went cold and bare ; that she was sickened with dainties, while they went faint and hungry. Then she would contrive, unnoticed, to eat nothing but bread, and would rise from her warm bed on winter nights, and sit crying in the cold, to made the difference seem less terrible.

But at the end the little Duchess had her opportunity. One night she and the Potentate went to the great opera-house to hear a famous singer. All the capital had flocked

to the place. There was not one vacant seat. In the middle of the opera there came a cry of fire, and there was a rush of terrified people trampling each other down mercilessly. The Potentate had a private entrance to his box, and, hurrying to the door, he unlocked it, and called to the little Duchess to follow him. But already a stream of people poured down from the gallery towards the open door—frightened men and women in shabby clothes, with here and there a child in their arms. The little Duchess might still escape, but she would need to push and struggle, to fight her way, and to save her life at the possible expense of others. So she stood back with a smile upon her lips. 'They were very welcome,' she thought—her heart going out to them in tenderness and love—to what she could give them. She loved them better than her life, and laid it down very readily for them. Then, as she stood aside, a great puff of suffocating smoke came rolling forth; and then came another and another. And the next morning, when the bodies were recovered from the ruins, the Duchess was found with the same smile—a smile of unspeakable satisfaction—on her little dead mouth.

THE LOST TUNE

ONCE upon a time, in the days when the world was still young, there lived a man on the edge of a great fen. He belonged to a tribe of hunters who preyed upon the wild creatures just as the wild creatures prey upon each other. They had built their huts on rising ground that overlooked a great sea of marsh. All through the long winter the swamp was icebound, a sheet of snow, or else a dull expanse of brown morass with here and there a pool of steel-blue water. The black east winds swept over the frozen marsh; there was not a gleam of colour to be seen; only sometimes, at the rising or setting of the sun, the sky flamed with red and orange, and many-coloured lights transfigured for a moment the sleeping earth. Great flocks of wildfowl came inland in the winter: swans that made the air rustle with their strong pinions; seagulls that settled on the ground to feed, and rose up together like a band of white-winged spirits; ducks that quacked and called to each other at sunrise and sunset; tall herons, and plovers with a melancholy cry. When the spring came and the ice melted, the marsh grew brighter every day. There came up vivid patches of emerald, and soft beds of yellow and of grey. The birds made their nests in the reeds, and the sweet spring air wandered over the fen, filling the hearts of men and beasts with hope and joy. The man loved the marsh as children of the soil needs must love their mother earth. For though our souls are the breath of God, and through them we are kin to the angels, yet our bodies

come from the dust and go to the dust, and are kin to the wild beasts and birds, and to the restless sea and silent fields.

In those old days there were only very few tunes known on earth, and they were strange wild airs, like those which the hungry wind sings when it blows in strong gusts over the world, beating the icy water into mighty waves under the low black sky, and howling like a pack of starved wolves round the creaking trees and the human habitations. Or else like the cry of the seagulls when the white mist creeps up over the muddy sea and the colourless land, and the broken driftwood that once was a living tree, and once a ship, the home of men upon the waters, floats dully on the dun-coloured tide. Or else a song like that of the rhythmic rain in winter, when all the world seems dead; only beneath the quiet sods the restless spirit of life is working all the while, lifting the soil below and making ready the tender leaves and flowers within the dry roots for the time when the sun shall bid them rise. There was no man in the tribe held in so much honour as the maker of a tune. For it was thought that the tunes came straight from Heaven, a gift from the Great Father to the restless hearts of men.

One day in the depth of winter, when the sun was going down in tranquil splendour behind the ice-blue rim of the frozen country, the man of whom I tell this story was walking homewards to his hut, through the brown reeds by the steel-coloured mere. He was singing in a rough tuneless way, when suddenly the notes, almost, it seemed, against his will, shaped themselves into a strangely sweet air. It lifted up his heart with it; it touched the secret spring of tears; it spoke of unknown joys; it thrilled through every nerve and fibre. And when the tune fell in perfect cadence to a lovely close, a great sense of triumph came upon him. This air was his; it had been sent to him from Heaven. He was the honoured messenger to his fellow men.

So he went home with his eyes shining with exultation,

and he called his tribe together to hear his tune. The people made a circle round him, a circle of eager, awe-struck faces. But they waited in vain. Twice he tried to begin, and twice he failed. Then he made a last effort, but his voice faltered. The tune had gone. For a few minutes the tribe paused irresolute. Then they began to jeer at him and insult him. It was growing dark now, and the blackness seemed to swallow up the low-lying marsh. He stepped out of their midst into the darkness, to wander, broken-hearted, through the world in search of the lost tune. Yet there were still two friends who believed in him—his wife and his dog. The dog went with him, and the wife awaited his return.

The long years drifted by, and the tribe had almost forgotten him. But his wife looked daily for his coming. She was an old woman now.

It was spring in the fens. The sun was sinking in a tranquil sky, and the birds were singing in the budding bushes on the knoll, singing those songs of divine possibilities, which are nevertheless in a minor key, and bring tears to the eyes. The broken emaciated figure of an old man crept up the slope. He was like a living shadow, yet his eyes were shining with exultation. He had found the tune. His wife called the tribe together, and once again he was encircled by a ring of eager faces. But as he began the first note he fell forward on his hands. The man was dead.

So the lost tune was never given to men. Sometimes they fancy they hear a note or two sweep past them ; sometimes out of the depth of their hearts a phrase of the air comes to eager ears, and then is gone again. But it is well for them, dwelling among the discords and the minor harmonies of earth, to know that there is such music.

THE WATERS OF LETHE

THERE was, once upon a time, a woman who was neither young nor pretty, nor even clever. She was just like nine people out of ten that you may chance to meet any day of your life. But there was this to be said of her : she was as faithful as some women, and most dogs. Her life had been a very sad one. I do not know the story ; so let everybody think of all that could hurt them most in Fate, and believe that she had this to bear. I know that the heartache never left her. She used to wake early, when the first glimmer of the grey dawn could be seen over the tops of the dark firs, and the little birds began to be restless in the ivy ; and she thought :

'A new day is beginning for the rest of the world. Only for me there are no new days. I have no future.' And, in the long black nights, it seemed to her that 'her pillow was not stuffed with feathers, but with sad thoughts.'

One evening—it was in autumn, when all the corn is carried, and the wide fields are nothing but bare stubble —she walked out of her house along the straight road that leads over the undulating country to the edge of the sky. The sun went down in an orange flame ; the rich soft colours lingered awhile in the quiet sky, and the birds flying home to bed stood out black against them. Then the splendour paled, and the lights faded, and a great chill fell on the wide bare landscape. The straight white road could still be seen in the dusk. It was like life, the woman

thought—long, monotonous, leading no one knew whither. At last she came to the open down, where there are great grassy barrows. Beneath these, strange warriors have slept for many hundred years. From the earth they sprang, like us, with human destinies of passion, and suffering, and unfulfilled desire ; and the earth gathered them long ago to her quiet breast, as she will one day gather us. The woman saw a crowd standing round the largest barrow, a crowd of sad, tired faces—'like me,' she thought, with a dull throb of sympathy. In the midst of them, on the top of the mound, sat an old, old man, thin, and white as a ghost. His cheeks were sunken ; his lips were of a bluish pallor. Only his eyes glowed—strange, immovable eyes, fixed on something that no one else could see. He was calling his wares :

'The Waters of Lethe! Come buy, come buy! Drink and forget.'

And the people came up, one by one, and drank deep draughts out of the smoke-coloured goblets ; and as they drank the pain and weariness faded out of their faces, giving place to the vacant wondering look of those who awake from a trance.

Then the woman took her turn, and held out her hand for a goblet. The water in it was dark and sluggish, like a sleep that knows no dreams. But before she raised the cup to her lips the old man checked her, and bade her think first of all that she would forget. Then the woman recalled her old home, and the dear familiar places she had known as a little child ; the nursery windows, against which the tall sycamore used to flap its leaves, flecked with black and orange ; the water-meadows, and the bar of quivering aspens ; the cowslip fields, and the solemn beeches, where the cawing rooks built every spring.

'Ah ! dear familiar places ! ' she said. 'I was so happy when I dwelt among you. You will forgive if I forget you.'

Then she thought of those who had loved her, of the kind faces that used to brighten at her coming, and the hands that were ever ready to do her service.

'Ah! dear men and women,' she said, 'your love for me was such, you will forgive if I forget you.'

Then there rose before her the remembrance of the person whom she had loved best in the world; whose very faults were dearer to her than anyone's virtues; whose very step and least intonation she knew by heart; for whom no service had been too great or too small; for whose sake pain and suffering and death itself would have seemed 'a very little thing'; the one person in the world who had been bitterly unkind and untrue to her. (It might have been a lover, or a husband, or a son. It could never have been a father or a brother.) Then she dashed the goblet down.

'Ah! no!' she cried. 'I could not bear to forget.'

And she stepped back into the shadows, and wandered over the down, eastward, toward the coming night.

VENI

THERE was once upon a time a Princess to whom the Pope sent a bough of box that he had blessed, telling her that she had only to wave it when she wanted anything, and to call her desire by name and say 'Veni,' and whatever it was would come to her. Only, the Holy Father warned her that she must be very careful as to what she called for, lest it might hurt her, and that it was better to ask only for simply material things. So the Princess asked for money, and a messenger came running to tell her that she had 50,000*l.* invested in the best securities. Then she called for diamonds, and there came shining stars to wear in her pretty hair; for dresses, and there came the loveliest silver and white ball-gown from Worth; for a devoted squire of dames, and there came the most beautiful young man imaginable, with a white gardenia in his button-hole.

But after a while the Princess grew weary of these things; and one day when she lay in her little white bed, while the sun was quite high in the heavens (for she was not the kind of bird that disturbs the peace of mind of the early worm), she bethought herself that she had tried many pleasures and emotions, but there was still one thing unknown to her. So, disregarding the Pope's warning, as well, indeed, as that of many other people, this wilful little Princess sat up in bed and waved her sacrosanto box-bush, and cried—

'Ohé! Veni, ô Grande Passion! Veni——'

But for whom, or what else, the little Princess was

about to call we shall never know, for *la Grande Passion*, a great sea of wild waters, with waves high as mountains and irresistible as death itself, came rolling up, and washed her away in her little white bed, rocking fearfully on the black floods far, far away on the vast unknown ocean. Her mother, the Queen, heard the noise—which, indeed, re-echoed through the Palace, and sounded as if all the pipes in the place had burst—and hurried to the stormy brink, and there, like Lord Ullin, she cried, 'My daughter! oh, my daughter!' and offered half her kingdom, anything, everything, even the daily gratification of all those little whims of the Princess which annoyed her most—and we all know this is a far greater sacrifice than a paltry half-kingdom—if she would only return. Bnt the poor little Princess couldn't, and wouldn't, and she is still tossing on those wild waters, which are sometimes hot as fire, and sometimes cold as ice, sometimes bitter as wormwood and rue, and sometimes exceeding sweet—sweet past all human knowledge. For people who have once tasted of these waters can never return any more to the pure, clear springs and cool wells where they used to drink as children. The familiar pleasures can know them no more, and they are for ever burnt with a thirst which these strange waters only can both give and quench. But sailors who have gone down to this sea in ships have told me that there is another shore on the other side, where some boats more fortunate than their fellows that perished in the waves have put into port; a shore where there are quiet harbours and green fields, 'Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, nor ever wind blows loudly.' Perhaps this may be so, and perhaps (for all the future is a great perhaps) the Princess may one day drift ashore, and find a kind face and welcoming hands out-stretched to greet her, and strong arms to lift her tenderly from her broken ark over the sand and shingle to the fresh spring-scented grass.

THE SAVAGE GIRL

ONCE upon a time there was a savage girl who lived alone with her father in a ruined house on a great moor. To the north there were the black rocks and the restless sea, but southwards the moor melted into woods and pastures. The girl spent all her days in wandering over the brown moor and the gaunt crags ; she was like one of the wild creatures, and was happy just as they are happy, with now and again a touch of their melancholy, of the sadness that you may see in the eyes of a stag, or that you may hear in the plover's cry. She used to stand on the shore and let the grey waves wash over her bare feet as she fed the sea-gulls from her hands ; and sometimes she would catch one, and hold the frightened, fluttering thing for an instant to her breast, that she might feel its wild heart beat against her wild heart, as free and untamed as its own. And she would sing for hours to the sea, strange melancholy airs that had no melody, airs on two or three notes, like the wind crying over the moor, or the sea sobbing in the caverns under the cliff. She used to climb the tall crags and sit on the edge, overhanging the green waters that tossed to and fro hundreds of feet below her, so many hundred that the fishermen's boats looked like toys. She loved the wild weather. When, at night, she heard the voice of the wind and the cry of the beating rain calling her, she could not withstand them, and she would climb out of her ruined window, and, away ! barefoot over the soaking moor, borne onward by the wind like a fluttering leaf. But if by any chance she wandered southward, and

came to the edge of the moor, where you look over rich pastures, and sheltering woods, and homesteads encircled by orchards, there would be borne in on her a strange uneasiness and sadness. There was a great gulf fixed between her and the lives of other men and women.

One autumn, a courtier from the king's court chanced to be riding over the moor, and joined her father's hounds. He was just like all other courtiers, but to the savage girl he seemed a fairy prince. Any tinder will strike a light. The girl worshipped the very ground he trod upon; and he was kind to her, as he was kind to his horse or his dog.

'If I could only be like the court ladies,' thought the girl, 'then he might love me.'

So she dressed herself in a stiff tight gown, and tried to sew a seam, while outside the strong storm was raging, blowing the sea-gulls far inland before it, and beating the blinding foam high up on the jagged rocks. She sat and sewed until she thought her heart would break and she would die, and she knew in her bones she could never learn to be like a court lady, because of the throbbing of the savage blood at her heart.

So one night, a still cold night in late autumn, when the dull white fog lay like a cerecloth over the face of the earth, she climbed out of her window and hurried across the heath to the home of an old witch, miles away. The witch lived beside a stagnant pool in the heart of a rotting wood. There was a smell of death in the air; the ground was covered with sickly brown fungus, and malevolent toads crept out of the rank grass to spit poison at the bare feet of the girl as she passed. She reached the pool, and called three times, and the echo answered her back like the voice of a banshee. The witch stood by her side—how she came there the girl did not know—and asked her what she wanted. The old woman's head was shrunk and bald, except for here and there a bristle. Her skin was of a sickly brown, like the fungus at her feet, and she had only one tooth in her head, one long, sharp, gamboge tooth. The girl was white

to the lips; all the blood in her veins seemed to turn back with horror, but she bravely told the witch that she had come to be freed from her wild instincts. Then the old witch answered:

'There is only one way to tame you. All the savage blood must be sucked out of you.'

A great trembling seized the girl, but she bowed her head and bared her left shoulder, which shone white as sea-foam. The witch set her gamboge tooth in it, and drew in her foul breath and sucked, and sucked, and sucked. The toads came up round her and sat in a ring, watching her with greedy eyes as still she sucked the warm young blood. Then she stopped and licked her lips, and the girl fell forward on her face on the sodden grass. She was dead; for there was not a single drop of blood in her body that was not hopelessly, irreclaimably savage.

Literary Articles

A BUNDLE OF LETTERS

ONE of the most charming chapters in that most charming book, 'Cranford,' contains the description of Miss Matty sorting and burning her old letters. Letters have a curious vitality about them; they carry us back with one bound to the days in which they were written. Time softens so many things, changes so entirely their aspects, blots out so many lines, that our memories scarcely serve us. But letters catch the thousand and one little trivialities of everyday life, and preserve them long after the 'hand that writ' them is dust. The wit and scandal and gossip of the Court of Louis XIV. are kept as fresh for us as though they belonged to yesterday in the pages of Madame de Sévigné's letters. We pass calm and uneventful days with Jane Austen in the little Hampshire parsonage that stood on the edge of the open chalk downs, nestling among the neat hazel copses. We smell with William Cowper the sweet penetrating scent of the mignonette in the flower-bed opposite his window, or wander with him and Mrs. Unwin through the pleasure-grounds of Weston. Or we discuss household affairs for the benefit of her 'Prueship' with kindly Richard Steele, while 'the brats . . . . stand on each side of the table,' and 'Miss Moll has taken upon her to hold the sand-box, and is so impertinent in her office' that the honest man 'cannot write more.'

For the very essence of a letter is that it should not merely contain news, but that it should bring with it a touch, an aroma, a subtle something, which is individual to

the writer. And the best letters often contain the least news, but have been written as they are read—without effort. They have no purpose, no design, and their very art is the 'art of simplicity.' 'I believe I am going to write a long letter, and have, therefore, taken a whole sheet of paper,' writes Johnson. 'This will be a quick return for yours, my dear Cassandra,' writes Miss Austen to her sister. 'I doubt its having much else to recommend it; but there is no saying—it may turn out to be a very long and delightful letter.' And it does turn out to be a delightful letter, like all those given to us in her Memoir—letters overflowing with gentle humour, and keen appreciation of the little comedies which are for ever being acted free of charge on the stage of this world. She has always something fresh and pleasant to say about the weather, the everyday people, and things that cross her path. Who does not know Mary W., whose 'turn is actually come to be grown up, and have a fine complexion, and wear great square muslin shawls'? or Charlotte Craven, whose 'hair is done up with an elegance to do credit to any education'? And who but Jane Austen could tell so pleasantly, as this little extract shows, the common story of an escape from an unwelcome caller?—

> Here has been that excellent Mrs. Coulthart calling, while my mother was out, and I was believed to be so. I always respected her as a good-hearted friendly woman. And the Browns have been here; I find their affidavits on the table.

There is a touch, too, in the following criticism on her niece's MS. novel which is inimitable, and of which the author of 'Mansfield Park' and 'Pride and Prejudice' alone could be capable:—

> Julian's history was quite a surprise to me. You had not very long known it yourself, I suspect, but I have no objection to make to the circumstance. It is very well told, and his having been in love with the aunt gives Cecilia an additional interest with him. I like the idea; a very proper compliment to an aunt! I rather imagine, indeed, that nieces are seldom chosen but in compliment to some aunt or other. I dare say your husband was in love with

me once, and would never have thought of you if he had not supposed me dead of a scarlet fever.

It has been said that Jane Austen's books are wanting in pathos. It is true they have none of the hysterical sentimentality, none of the morbid love of all that is painful, which are so common in the novels of the present day. Yet it can scarcely be denied that the character of Anne in 'Persuasion' is treated with a great tenderness, and drawn by a very delicate hand. This character is all the more touching for its reticence, for its modest self-control, and Anne is as womanly in her yieldingness as she is in her constancy. There has been a conjecture that Anne is Jane Austen herself, and that the story of the heroine was possibly that of the writer—only with a different ending. It is easy to believe that this may be true, although proofs are wanting. We find in Miss Austen's own letters to her family the same sweet traits, the same gentle affection, the same quiet depth of feeling that we have loved in the heroine of 'Persuasion'; and towards the end, when her health failed her, we read between the lines still more clearly her pure unselfish nature:—

Thanks to the kindness of your father and mother [she writes to her nephew, when she was moved to Winchester for further medical advice], in sending me their carriage, my journey hither on Saturday was performed with very little fatigue, and had it been a fine day I think I should have felt none; but it distressed me to see Uncle Henry and William Knight, who kindly attended us on horseback, riding in the rain almost the whole way.

And again:—

As to what I owe her [her sister Cassandra], and the anxious affection of all my beloved family on this occasion [her illness], I can only cry over it, and pray God to bless them more and more.

In the same way the poet Cowper, in his letters, lets us into the secrets of his reticent, sensitive nature. We learn how 'dejection of spirits,' which 'may have prevented many a man from becoming an author,' made him a poet; and

that 'John Gilpin' was written 'in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood perhaps had never been written at all.' We cannot choose but love him, whether we find him struggling in those terribly deep and bitter waters in which, to use his own simile, he was whelmed ; or whether we find him playing with his kitten, 'the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin,' and who was 'dressed in a tortoiseshell suit' ; or enjoying the beauty of his myrtles in his greenhouse when 'our severest winter, commonly called spring, is over,' and the double row of grass pinks and the bed of beans are filling the air with their delicate scent. He touches all the little details of life, in his letters, with a grace and tact which give each little sentence an air of its own. His humour has the subdued charm of 'the gentleness of the autumnal suns and the calmness of this latter season.' The scholarly leisure of his life is an appropriate background for the sober beauty of his poems. The terrible misery which it was his burden to bear only sets off in still sharper relief the purity and childlike simplicity of his life, passed among his tame hares and his three pet kittens ('for we have so many in our retinue'), and in 'a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it.' One feels that his nature was really a woman's nature, unfit to meet the wear and tear of the world ; dependent, affectionate, clinging, and with a woman's sense and appreciation of the little daily events which do not generally enter into a man's life. Even his ambition was so timid and easily affrighted that it was almost unknown to his friends. '*I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature an infinite share of ambition*,' he writes, underlining his words, to Lady Hesketh. But, at the same time, he confesses that, 'till lately I stole through life without undertaking anything, yet always wishing to distinguish myself.'

His delicate health, which was such a weariness to him through life, never soured his temper. 'They all say it is a pity I am so sickly,' wrote poor Pope in a grim jest, 'and I think it is a pity they are so healthy.' But William Cowper

grudged no one health or happiness. If he looked with longing eyes at God's sunshine, he never would have taken it away from man, woman, or child. His nature was too sweet and unselfish to know what envy is.

It has been said, and I think unfairly, that with the introduction of the penny post died the art of letter-writing. But as long as there are people with literary instincts, and with a facility of expression—as long as there is daily life to be chronicled in all its pleasant triviality—as long as there are friends divided by thousands of miles of land and sea—so long (and this will probably be to the end of time) will letter-writing deserve to be cultivated as a fine art.

Nor need we go far to find interest in a bundle of letters. Everyone, except perhaps the very tidy people who burn all their letters, and the very untidy people who leave theirs for the housemaid to burn, has, stored away in some drawer, packets of yellowing papers, written over in faded ink, which contain more or less the history of their lives. There are the blotted, straggly notes from schoolfellows and from brothers and sisters in the old, very old days. Here is the last letter you ever had from poor little Bobbie, and the childish handwriting brings back, as keenly as though it were yesterday, the pang of despair of your first sorrow, which was so different from all other sorrows because it was the first. And here is that letter of excellent advice which offended you so deeply once upon a time, and which is in substance exactly the same as that you are going to write to your nephew next week. Here are old business letters ; old love letters ; letters full of old jokes, of which the clue has been lost, and which have faded into nothingness long ago, like a candle that is blown out. This is a packet (sealed with the signet ring that was your gift) from the friend who was once all in all to you, and has since passed out of your life like a dream in the night. And here are letters with strange postmarks and foreign stamps, letters closely written on thin paper, that have travelled thousands and thousands of miles to tell you that the writer still thought of you and

loved you. And there is that last one, too, over which you have shed so many tears, and which arrived after the news of his death—a simple garrulous letter, winding up with, 'There is no news to tell you, but I shall be home again, please God, next summer,' or some such phrase, which cuts you still to the heart. And so on, and so on, until you are forced to own that these poor old letters have a charm of their own that time and change can only heighten, and around which Death even can only set a halo.

THE LIBRARY OF A LADY OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the dining-room of a house that I know well there hangs over the chimney-piece the portrait of a lady, painted by Sir Peter Lely. She is not pretty, but she has a kind, homely face, quite unlike many of the ladies that Sir Peter used to paint. She is dressed in pearly satin, with a red scarf floating from her shoulders. As to her name, I will only repeat what Ben Jonson wrote in his 'Epitaph on Elizabeth L. H.':

> 'One name was Elizabeth,
> The other let it sleep with death.'

There has always been the tradition concerning our Elizabeth that she was an excellent woman—a good wife and a kind mother. She lies buried in the little country churchyard, and there is a monument to her memory within the church, which stands in a sheltered hollow in the windy fields, overlooking a great sweep of bare, open country. There is a ring of brown beech-trees, where the rooks build, and a low stone wall at the edge of the graveyard; and here, in the spring, blossom the first celandines and sweet white violets. And there is also one bushy yew-tree standing up in the midst of the green beds of the sleeping people. How many sweet hopes, and weary burthens, and disappointed hearts lie there? We shall never know; and, indeed, it is only when we ourselves have seen the brown trench opened, and heard the sound of the sharp stones and heavy earth falling on the coffin that holds one

we loved, that we learn how much of our own lives and hearts may be buried in those graves.

In the library of the manor-house there are still to be seen Elizabeth's books, and in each she has inscribed her name in her large and rather tremulous handwriting. First of all there is her Bible, which has a dishevelled Magdalen and a weeping willow embroidered in tarnished gold and silver thread on the cover. On the flyleaf she has written the date of her marriage, and the dates of the birth of her children. And then, lower down—and this time, poor lady! in very faint, blurred writing—the record of the death of the youngest infant 'of Convolsian Fitts.' There are the Psalms of Sternhold and Hopkins, which have been so long superseded by those of Tate and Brady; and next to Sternhold and Hopkins we have a Church of England Prayer-book 'done' into Portuguese, which clearly shows us that Elizabeth was a woman of fashion, and had learnt the language of Catherine of Braganza. And then follow a row of little, shabby, well-worn books, here and there with passages marked, and with leaves turned down at places to which, no doubt, the dear lady loved to recur. In 'Death made Comfortable, or the Way to Dye Well,' the page which contains the 'Prayer on the Death of a Child' is dog-eared and worn with much using. One can almost fancy one sees the marks of tears on the dim yellow paper. The prayer is expressed quaintly enough, yet there is something touching in the plain, homely words: 'O! Almighty Father, thou art pleased now to turn my joys into Sorrows, and to take away from me that sweet Babe, which thou lately gavest me for my Delight and Comfort. But I humbly Bow my Self to bear it patiently and without murmuring because it is thy Doing. Thou hast sent this poor little Child into the World, O! Lord, to see and to taste Life, but hast not allowed it to stay till it Could rightly understand the end and business, or relish the Comforts and Satisfactions thereof.'

Then follow the simple consolations: 'If it Stayed not

here to enjoy pleasure; soe neither did it Stay to be pined away with Sorrow and Care. It lived not long enough to be versed in all the Vexations of our State, nor to run thro that Great variety of miseryes and misfortunes, which are incident here to our Nature, But went off before it had time to trye how much Evil is to be Endured in this Life; yea before it was come, to aggravate any afflictions by imagination, or to anticipate the same by Fear, or to reflect in bitterness of Spirit, and lay to heart what it did endure.'

The next prayer in the little book is for one who 'is made childless,' and it ends with the words: 'Tho among Men I am quite forgotten, yet let me be Graciously remembered, and received by thee when thou reckonest and callest over the Number of thy Children, for my dear Lord and Saviour's sake.' There are prayers for every possible person in every possible condition, with obliging notes in the margin, advising us in certain cases to omit 'the words within the books,' and to put 'we for they, ours for theirs, are for am, &c.' And there is a preface which contains 'Directions for an Holy and an Happy Death,' in which it recommends ministers to see that their 'Discourses also be Savoury,' so that the dying man may be 'stored with matter for devout thoughts and Ejaculations.'

The next book upon the shelf is 'The Heart's Ease, or, a Remedy against all troubles, with a Consolatory Discourse to prevent Immoderate Grief.' It advocates what we might call drastic treatment; some of the advice for modifying grief is really alarming. 'When thy mind is troubled,' says Dr. Symon Fitzpatrick, 'and whines and cries for such and such a bauble, do with it as we do with children when they cry they know not for what, affright it with the representation of some terrible thing; shew it the pains of Hell, ask it how it likes to burn in eternal flames, and whether it can be contented to be damned. Let it see there is something indeed to cry for, if it cannot be quiet; and bid it tell thee if it be an easie thing to dwell with everlasting burnings. And when it starts at the thought of them, bid it be quiet

then. And well pleased, if it can flye from such a misery, whatsoever else it can endure.'

I doubt whether this receipt for Heart's Ease has ever given much comfort to anyone. There is, however, one story in the book which is pretty. It is quoted from Holcoth. A learned man was found dead in his study, leaning over a book that lay before him, with his hand on the open page. The friend who first entered the room was nearly broken-hearted at the sight; but when he looked closer, and read the verse on which the dead man's hand still rested, he was greatly comforted. For these were the words: 'Though the just be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest.'

'The Happy Ascetick, or the Best Exercise,' by Anthony Horneck (preacher at the Savoy), is a fair-sized volume, with a frontispiece representing a set of peculiarly-dressed men toiling in a still more peculiar vineyard, which slants, regardless of perspective, up the page. This book contains an exercise of pious ejaculations for all occasions, which has a certain simple grace of its own, and from which I will quote here and there a sentence: 'When thou hearest the Clock strike, let thy Mind immediately mount up to Heaven and say, "Lord, so teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"; When thou art dressing thyself, "Cloth my soul with salvation, and deck me with white raiments." . . . When going by Water, "O satisfie my Soul with the Fatness of thy House, and make me to drink of the River of thy Pleasures." When receiving any injury or ill-language, "Sweet Jesu, Give me Grace to follow thy example, and to tread in thy steps, who being reviled, didst not revile again." . . . When seeing snow, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." When seeing it Rain, "O visit me with the former and latter rain of thy favour."'

There are some curious stories of the saints introduced into this book, and at the end of the 'Happy Ascetick'

there follows a 'Letter to a Person of Quality on the Early Christians.' The practice of Papias is commended—he who was 'mighty enquisitive what Andrew, what Philip, what Peter, what James, what John, and what the rest of the Apostles of our Lord had done.' There is the story of one Maria Ægyptica, 'who had nothing to Feed upon for seventeen years together'; and of a certain John, 'who was supported without Food ten years.' Yet we are told not to believe these tales too implicitly; nor are we to try to 'tread in the steps of these gyants in Fasting.' We are given the pretty story of St. Paula, who resisted many sore temptations, and who, when her husband (the Beloved Toxotius) died, was inclined to despair, yet 'checkt the ill-suggestion.' She it was who was charged with madness, and was greatly tempted to give her accusers back 'unhandsome Language,' yet restrained her tongue, remembering for Whose sake she suffered such injuries. We may smile at the simplicity of these things, but can we mend their piety? 'Ah! how duskish are my thoughts in this house of Clay!' says the quaint old writer of the 'Christian Sacrifice'; and each generation gropes, after its own fashion, through the dim twilight, and up the dark steps that lead to the Eternal Father, seeking 'if haply they might feel after Him and find Him.'

The last book on the shelf is one which Elizabeth must have been given only a year or two before her death. It is the 'Dictionaire Æconomique, or the Family Dictionary, Done into English.' It is full of information on household matters, and gives us a great many interesting hints. For example, under the heading of Age, we are favoured with a number of receipts for prolonging life. We are advised to drink of some decoction 'two handsome glasses every morning fasting,' in which case we shall reach a great age. We are told what to do when a certain 'distemper' attacks our hens and makes them appear 'pensive and melancholick.' We can learn here how to make 'Apricock Wine,' and how to cure asthma by 'taking a handful of common wood-

lice,' wrapping them in a cloth, and steeping them in a pint of white wine, which is afterwards to be given to the patient to drink. A child with the whooping-cough should wear round its neck the root of garden flag newly gathered ; for epilepsy the sick person is recommended to wear a girdle of wolf's skin, or to hang round his throat some mistletoe from an oak, some coral, or an emerald, or the 'Forehead Bone of an Ass.' 'A ring made of the foot of an Elk, worn upon the fourth Finger, not only cures the Falling Sickness, but also Convulsions, and all Contractions of the Nerves.'

There are also 'Cosmeticks, Ornaments, or Washes for the Fair Sex,' among which we find receipts for 'an unguent that brings the skin to exquisite beauty,' and for an 'admirable Cosmetick to make a pleasing ruddy complexion.' To take wrinkles out of the face 'anoint with oil of myrrh, and cover over with a waxed cloth.' And for those who lose their memory there is a great deal of good advice. You are to rub your temples with castor oil, or to drink marigold and sage pounded and infused in white wine. 'A secret to obtain a good memory is to take a swallow's heart,' mixed with various other things, and eat a piece 'as big as a nut' every morning for a month. And our Dictionary adds, 'You may carry about you the Wing of a Hoop or Lapwing, the tooth of a Badger, or his left Paw with the Nails on ; though there are those who think these are trifling things.'

We are also supplied with cooking receipts, and recipes for cordials and home-made wines. I have just come upon one of the latter, which I hear is still made abroad, and is quite excellent, very superior to our English elderberry wine as a remedy for colds and coughs :—

'Elder Flower Wine.'

Thirty pounds single loaf sugar to twelve gallons of water. Boil till two gallons be wasted, 'scumming it well' the while. Let it stand till it 'be as cool as Wort.' Then add two or three spoonfuls of yeast, and when it works add

two quarts of elder-blossom, picked from the stalks. Stir every day until it has ceased working, which will be in five or six days. Strain it and put it into a vessel. Tie it down, and let it stand two months. Then bottle it.

Such are the books that compose the library of a lady of the seventeenth century. The choice of books is small, nor are any of them remarkable as works of literature. Yet they sufficed Elizabeth, and it may be that though she read little she thought all the more. And for us, too, these superannuated books have a value if they serve to lift, be it ever so little, the veil that shrouds the daily life of two hundred years ago.

BOOKS AND THEIR READERS

THERE was once a poor lad whom I knew who was dying of decline in a little dingy room up a flight of dark rickety stairs. His window looked on a blank wall—dreariest of all outlooks. He could hear no pleasanter sounds than the miauling of nocturnal cats or the voice of his landlady downstairs quarrelling with her poor little maid-of-all-work. And yet as the lad lay there alone, it seemed to him (when his cough was not too hacking, or the pain in his chest too severe) that the dull chamber was lit with sunshine, and his solitude cheered by kindly guests. For he led two lives—one, a poor suffering life, amid ugly things and unsympathetic people; the other amid all that was pleasant and lovely in the land of Books. These books, poor fellow, were few enough in number. While he had been strong enough to work he had been a shoemaker, and every penny he could save had gone to buy some precious volume. One of the great musicians of the day, who has risen from poverty and obscurity to wealth and fame, says now that no one can really love Music who has not been poor and worked for her. We all of us love best what has cost us most, and the true passions of our lives are for the things that are hardest to have and hardest to hold. I fancy that those fourteen years that Jacob worked for Rachael were, in part, the secret of his love for her. And so it was with my shoemaker. Each of these books represented to him the sacrifice of many little pleasures—oftentimes, indeed, of his dinner—many hours of extra work. He had hung round

the bookstalls, with envious eyes, for days and days before the pence he could put by had mounted up to the price of one of the volumes he coveted.

Now that he was ill these dear friends were with him. They lay on his bed, so that when he was too ill to do more he could stretch out his wasted hand and lovingly touch their covers. When he died I think they should have been buried with him, but they were sold to pay the expenses of the poor funeral. Who knows into what careless hands they fell? Who knows what barbarian scribbled over them, blotted them with ink, and flung them about? The lad's favourite books had been an English translation of the 'Iliad' and of the 'Odyssey.' Thanks to these, this poor shoemaker had stood by Andromache and Hector at the Scæan gates when they took leave of each other with those noble and pathetic words that have stirred thousands of men and women's hearts since they were first said or sung. He had followed silver-footed Thetis on her errand to Hephæstus, and watched the forging of Achilles' mighty armour. He had sat with prudent Penelope in her upper chamber as she took counsel of the dear nurse Eurycleia, and had wandered over the salt seas with Odysseus, past the sweet-voiced syrens and the dangers of Charybdis and Scylla, to the stately halls of Ithaca. 'I walked far into Herefordshire,' says Lord Macaulay, in his journal, 'and read, while walking, the last five books of the Iliad, with deep interest and many tears. I was afraid to be seen crying by the parties of walkers that met me as I came back—crying for Achilles cutting off his hair, crying for Priam rolling on the ground in the courtyard of his house—mere imaginary beings, creatures of an old ballad-maker who died near three thousand years ago.' My poor shoemaker would lie for hours dreaming, with the ἔπεα πτερόεντα (the winged words) haunting his memory. These soiled, second-hand books gave him the visions and sweet fancies that lifted him out of the dull world he lived in. I dare say their next owner was some schoolboy, who used them as 'cribs,' who drew on their sacred leaves fancy portraits of his masters, in

that well-known Early English style where a round represents a head, three dots the eyes and mouth, and where the five fingers branch off in lovely symmetry from a straight stick.

Who shall decide what is rubbish and what is a relic? That bundle of letters, that little flaxen curl of the baby who has slept these many years beneath a grassy coverlet, that ugly china cup that you value because it was your mother's, that shabby blotting-book that is so dear to you because it belonged to your dead friend—all your little relics, in short, will not they be rubbish one day? I remember going to call on a dear old lady that I knew, and finding her pale and with red eyes bending over a little heap of cinders in the grate. She had been burning old letters. 'Nobody but myself would care for them,' she said, 'and I could not bear that they should fall into careless hands.' And yet it must have cost her a great pang to see the flames catch at the yellow papers, and flare, and die away—a great oppression at her heart to think that this link with her youth and with the past was gone for ever.

It goes to my heart to see a book ill-treated. I cannot but marvel at the audacity of those daredevil spirits who dog-ear Shakespeare, fling Homer across the room, smudge Dante with ink, and stretch Bacon open on his face, to the everlasting detriment of his back and his binding. It does not matter in what mean shape these great minds visit me; in however poor a dress they come, they are always my much loved masters, to whom I owe all my allegiance. I confess that I am loth to lend my books to the first comer. I require more than the usual credentials of character. The mere certificates of baptism and vaccination—so to speak—will not content me, I must be assured in the most solemn and satisfactory manner of the person's honesty and reverent bearing towards books. The borrowed book is too often like Ellen Brine of Allenburn, in Mr. Barnes's charming poem, who, as it is expressly stated at the end of each verse, 'will no more return.' 'Giving is dead,' says George Herbert in his 'Jacula Prudentum,' and 'restoring very sick.'

'*At least*, sir, I always take away all your books,' said an indignant valet to his master, who had rebuked him for carelessness in packing, whereby he had collected a small library of strange books from other people's houses. 'To lend Bysshe a book,' says Hogg in his 'Life of Shelley,' 'was to bid it a long farewell, to take leave of it for ever; and, indeed, the pain of parting was often spared, for he bore away silently, reading it as he went, any work that caught his attention.' Surely in this respect Shelley had a large following.

Books grow into one's life like people. Like people, too, there are some books that come into one's life and change it for a time, and pass so completely out of it that the place knows them no more. It is strange to see the books which have made most mark in their generation. Who would commit suicide now after reading 'Werther'? Or who would model his children's education on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as Richard Edgeworth did, and many other worthy people of his day? I have before me Lilly's 'Euphues' and Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia,' books which Charles Kingsley said it was a credit to their generation to have loved, so noble is their tone. Who reads them now? Two or three people at most, who are curious in literature, or who want to boast that they have read them. And as to the books of our own time that we prize, who shall predict which among them shall live? For my part I think it is only those that have the 'touch of nature' which 'makes the whole world kin' that can survive. 'L'homme est le même partout' (man is the same everywhere), said Azeglio's French doctor, and what appeals to the human instincts in the year 1884 will probably appeal to them in 1994. But the books that are not broadly human, that only satisfy a passing need, and address themselves to fancies and conceits of a moment, can have but little vitality in them.

It used to touch me to see how dearly my poor shoemaker loved the books that described the green country of which he had seen little or nothing. He who had never

wandered over the great purple moors, or the quiet pastures, nor loitered in the moonlit beech woods of a summer night, guessed vaguely at the pleasure and the beauty of such things from the descriptions of them in his books. The last time I ever saw him I brought with me a bunch of single daffodils and spiked blackthorn, fresh from the sweet lanes and windy fields in far-off Devon. 'I know them,' he said, pointing with a smile of recognition to the yellow 'Lent rosen'; 'there's a deal about them in one of my books.' And he showed me Wordsworth's poem about the daffodils and their 'jocund company.'

JOHN AYLMER AND HIS SCHOLAR

JOHN AYLMER was born at Aylmer Hall in 1521. His family, according to his biographer, Strype, who wrote his life at the request of the publisher Brabazon Aylmer, was both 'antient and gentile.' We hear of a certain 'Mrs. Fraunces Aylmer,' a gentlewoman of the Court, 'who was one of the ladies that attended Queen Jane, King Henry VIII. his most beloved wife, on horseback at her most splendid and most solemn Funeral.' John Aylmer was educated at Cambridge, but seems to have taken his Degrees of Divinity at Oxford. His patron, Henry Grey, Marquis of Dorset, afterwards Duke of Suffolk, who had known him from childhood, appointed him as tutor to his children. Here, indeed, Aylmer found one willing pupil. For when, in 1550, Roger Ascham came to say farewell to Lady Jane Grey (who was then, as some say, fifteen years old), at Broadgate, in Leicestershire, he found both her parents and all the household out hunting in the Park, and Lady Jane herself alone in her chamber 'reading "Phædon Platonis" in Greek, and that with as much delight,' to quote Ascham's own words, 'as some gentlemen would read a merry tale in Boccasse. After Salutation and Duty done, with some Talk, I asked her why She would leefe such Pastime in the Park. Smiling, she answered me, "I wis al their sport in the Park is but a shadow to that Plesure that I find in Plato." Alas! good Folk, they never felt what true Plesure meant.'

And when Roger Ascham asked the sweet prig: 'How came you, madam, to this deep Knowledge of Plesure . . . .

seeing not many women, but few men, have attained thereunto?' she replied, 'One of the greatest Benefits that ever God gave me is that he sent me so sharp and severe Parents and so gentle a Schoolmaster.' And she went on to describe the harshness of her father and mother. 'I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea presently sometimes with pinches, nipps, and bobbs, and other ways (which I will not name for the honour I bear them) so without mesure misordered, that I think myself in Hell till time come that I must go to Mr. Aylmer, who teacheth me so gently, so pleasantly, with such fair allurements to Learning that I think all the time nothing whiles I am with him. And when I am called from him I fall on weeping, because whatsoever I do else but learning is full of Grief, Trouble, Fear, and wholly misliking to me.'

It is said that Lady Jane knew eight languages—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chaldee, Arabic, French, Italian, and English; that she 'played well on instrumental music,' 'writ a curious hand,' and was 'excellent at her needle.' It is a curious fact that this name of Jane was then of recent introduction. Camden says, 'In latter years some of the nicer sort misliking Ioane have molified the name of Ioane into Iane, as it may seeme, for that Iane is never found in old Records, and, as some will have, never before the time of Henry VIII.' It is possible that his queen, Jane Seymour, brought the name into fashion.

Ascham begged John Aylmer to see that Lady Jane wrote to him and Johannes Sturmiss each a Greek letter. He considered Lady Jane and Lady Mildred Cecil (wife of Sir William Cecil) to be the most learned women in England. Ascham himself, despite his learning and ability, died poor, owing to his overwhelming passion for gaming and cock-fighting.

Aylmer tells a story of Lady Jane, which probably happened whilst he was living at Broadgate. She had received from her Cousin Mary 'a goodly apparel of tinsel cloth of gold and velvet laid on with parchment lace of gold,' by

which means no doubt Mary thought to ingratiate herself with Lady Jane. 'What shall I do with it?' asked Jane. 'Wear it!' cried a gentlewoman. 'Nay, that were a shame,' rejoined the pretty sententious girl, 'to follow my Lady Mary against God's Word, and leave my Lady Elizabeth, which followeth God's Word.' There is something at once Puritanical and sweet in Lady Jane's character, a quaint mixture of gentleness and severity. Whether her nature was one that could be capable of a wider development is uncertain; but the glimpse we have of her shows us a very pure, fearless spirit, full of a simple maidenly reticence, and with all refinement of a scholar.

In the spring of 1553 there were great preparations made at Court for the marriages of Lady Jane Grey with Lord Guildford Dudley, son of the Duke of Northumberland, of Lady Catherine Grey with Henry Lord Herbert, eldest son of the Earl of Pembroke, and of several others, which were all to take place about the same time. The Master of the King's Wardrobe was commanded to deliver up jewels and apparel and 'certain parcels of tissues and cloth of gold and silver,' that had formerly belonged to the Duke and Duchess of Somerset.

Everyone knows the rest of Lady Jane's short and innocent life; her unwillingness to mount the throne, her ten days' reign, her imprisonment in the Tower, and then the last farewell to life. Of all virtues, perhaps, courage is the most catching, as cowardice is the most infectious of all vices.

John Aylmer was noted all his life through for fearlessness and fortitude. It may be that his influence had helped early to strengthen his sweet scholar, and to embolden her gentle nature. There are some scenes in history which are so dramatic or so touching that they have been dwelt upon by every historian. To such scenes belong the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, the murder of Thomas à Becket, the last few hours of Charles I., and the execution of Lady Jane Grey. But to my mind, of all historians who have

told this last story, Hollingshed tells it best, and I will repeat it as far as possible in his words.

On February 12, Monday, 'about ten of the clock,' Lord Guildford Dudley was beheaded on Tower Hill. 'His bodie being laid in a cart, and his head in a cloth, was brought into the Chappell within the Tower, where the Ladie Jane, whose lodging was in Maister Partridge's house, did see his dead carcasse taken out of the cart, as well as she did see him before alive going to his death: a sight (as might be supposed) to hir worse than death. By this time was there a scaffold made upon the greene over against the White Tower for the Ladie Jane to die upon; who, being nothing at all abashed neither with the fear of hir owne death which then approached, neither with the sight of the dead carcasse of hir husband when he was brought into the Chappell, came forth, the Lieutenant leading hir, with countenance nothing abashed, neither hir eies anething moistened with teares, with a booke in hir hand, wherein she praied until she came to the scaffold. Whereon, when she was mounted, this noble young ladie, as she was indued with singular gifts both of learning and knowledge, so was she as patient and milde as anie lambe at hir execution.'

Save for this one rough word—'the dead *carcasse* of hir husband'—which grates upon our modern sense of delicacy, it would be hard to find a tale told in more tender or more touching words.

Then follows her speech—a few simple words attesting her innocence, and declaring her faith 'in the mercie of God,' and in 'the blood of His onlie Sonne Jesus Christ.' She repeated a psalm in English, and then was assisted in her preparations by her maid ('called Mistresse Ellin') and her two gentlewomen, who 'gave hir a faire handkercher to put about her eies.' Then she knelt down and felt for the block: 'Where is it, where is it?' and a bystander guided her to it. 'Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit,' said the poor child, and laid her pretty head down, and so died.

Her husband had obtained leave to bid her good-bye, but

she had refused to see him, dreading the pain of a farewell, and the effect it might have upon his courage. She bade him remember how soon they would meet—in another world. The Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir John Gage, had asked her to give him some remembrance of her, and she put into his hands her 'table-book,' in which she had just written three short sentences—one in Latin, one in Greek, and one in English—upon seeing her husband's dead body. Fecknam, Dean of St. Paul's, and afterwards Abbot of Westminster, who had vainly endeavoured to persuade her to become a Roman Catholic, had obtained three days' grace for her from the Queen, but Lady Jane had assured him with 'a pleasant countenance' that she did not desire life. Fecknam accompanied her to the scaffold, where she affectionately embraced him, thanking him for his kind intentions, although she died, as she had lived, a Protestant.

John Aylmer, who had been made Archdeacon of Stowe, maintained Protestant doctrines at Convocation, where he was supported by five others of the clergy. For this act of daring he was deprived of his archdeaconry, and he wisely retreated to Strasbourg and Zurich, until Queen Mary's death. Before he left the Continent he printed at Strasbourg, in 1559, 'a small but truly learned piece,' called 'An Harborowe for faithful and treue subjects; Against the late blowne Blaste concerning the Government of Wemen. Wherein he confuted al such reasons, as a stranger of late made in that behalfe; with a breif Exhortation to Obedience.' In this treatise he demolished, to his satisfaction, John Knox's arguments against allowing women to ascend the throne. In 1562 he was made Archdeacon of Lincoln (an office which was then valued at 179*l.* 19*s.*), and he 'purged the Cathedral Church of Lincoln,' which was 'at that time a nest of unclean Birds.' In 1576 he was given the Bishopric of London, which he continued to hold until his death in 1594.

His gentleness as a schoolmaster to Lady Jane is all the more remarkable that he appears to have been extremely hasty with the rest of the world. His enemies, of whom

the worthy man appears to have had a great number, accused him of playing at bowls on Sunday, and saying 'devil take it' when he made an unsuccessful cast. He acknowledged that he played on Sundays, and owned to the expression 'by my faith,' but passes over his other words in silence.

His accusers, says Strype, 'told it abroad with triumph, how one dame Lawson, a Citizen's Wife, a bold prating Woman, came to the Bishop at St. Paul's Gate, and bade him throw himself down at her Majestie's Feet and acknowledge himself to be unsavoury Salt, and to crave pardon of her Highness, because he had so long deceived her and her people . . . . But the apologiser in the name of the bishop replied that this Dame came at no time to him in that Bravery. For if she had, the Bishop was not so soft but she should have felt of his Discipline and the Queen's authority.' To the last John Aylmer was courageous and determined both in word and action. Sir John Harington tells us that when Aylmer was quite an old man he 'cudgelled' his son-in-law 'soundly'—and most deservedly—for brutal behaviour to his wife, the Bishop's daughter. 'For,' says Strype, who repeats the story, 'the Bishop was a man of his Arms, and would not turn his back on any man.' In December, 1578, Queen Elizabeth suffered agonies from toothache, and rested neither night nor day. She refused to have the offending tooth extracted, and after a useless consultation of physicians, the Lords of the Council sent for John Anthony Fentus, 'an outlandish physician of some note, as it seems, for giving ease in this anguish.' He was commanded to present his advice in writing, whereupon he penned a long letter in Latin, apologising for his boldness in prescribing after so many learned doctors, and then advising, if the tooth be hollow, it should be pulled out. Knowing the Queen's 'abhorence' of 'such chirurgical instruments,' he recommended that the juice of *Chelidonius major* should be applied to loosen the tooth, so that it might be pulled out by the fingers. But, any way, it had better come out. 'And now it seems,' says Strype, 'that the Bishop

of London being present, a man of high courage . . . . though he were an old man, and had not many teeth to spare . . . . immediately bade the Surgeon come and pull out one of his teeth' ('perhaps,' adds the biographer, hopefully, 'a decayed one') 'in her Majestie's presence.' This example of fortitude so much encouraged the Queen that she consented to follow his example.

Aylmer knew Elizabeth as a girl, and gives a report of her then which is, in some respects, a strange contrast to her character in later years. Her Italian master assured him that 'he had found in her two Qualities which were never lightly Yoke-fellows in one Woman—namely, a singular Wit, and a marvellous meek Stomach,' which latter attribute was, we should certainly have thought, the least remarkable of Elizabeth's graces. Ascham told Aylmer that he learned more from her every day than she of him. 'I teach her Words,' he said, 'and she me Things. I teach her the Tongues to speak, and her modest and maidenly Looks teach me Works. For I think she is the best disposed in all Europe.' And speaking of her simple taste in dress, Aylmer says: 'When all the ladies, at the coming of the Scots Queen, went with their hair frownsed, curled, and double curled, she altered nothing, but kept her old maidenly shamefastness.'

John Aylmer is described as 'mean of stature,' and we are told that he wore 'a long grey beard.' His picture shows us a grave face, with heavy features; a wide forehead, and high cheek-bones. As Bishop of London, 'he kept a good house, having eighty servants with him in his family.' And he 'built and repaired houses, bridges, and scoured and cleansed ditches and common sewers.' And as to his character, it is scarcely needful to say that he was no saint, but an honest well-meaning man; violent and arbitrary, yet worthy of all honour in this one respect—that he was absolutely devoid of fear.

A LOVER OF LEISURE

In this pitilessly busy nineteenth century the very name of leisure has a soothing sound. Most people have a beautiful dream, a mirage of a state of perfect leisure. They may never realise it, or reach it themselves, save in the great world of books, where some of us spend the best part of our lives, and wherein it is the delight and solace of so many tired and sad people to wander, finding there all they had longed for, and more besides. 'Wings have we,' says Wordsworth,

> '—— and as far as we can go,
> We may find pleasure:'

and he adds:

> 'Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good:
> Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
> Our pastime and our happiness will grow.'

Leisure has its especial literature; a very rich and charming one, to which belong Charles Lamb's 'Essays,' Cowper's poems and letters, 'The Imitation of Jesus Christ,' Bacon's 'Essays,' John Evelyn's works, Izaak Walton's 'Lives,' 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' Addison's 'Sir Roger de Coverley,' Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia,' and a thousand more books to be read reverently in the long winter evenings, before a fragrant wood fire, with drawn curtains, while the hungry wind is crying softly round the house; or on summer days, beneath the shadowy boughs of lime-trees, where bees are drowsy with honey.

There is something very pathetic in the story which tells us how Charles Lamb, in his dingy office, longed piteously to have a pension 'on this side of absolute incapacity and infirmity,' so that he might walk out in the 'fine Izaak Walton mornings, careless as a beggar, and walking, walking, and dying walking'; but—'the hope is gone. I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing) with my breast against this thorn of a desk.' And then one day, suddenly his wishes were granted, and 'all being holidays, I feel as if I had none, as they do in Heaven, where 'tis all red-letter days.' 'Would I could sell you some of my leisure!' he says to his friend. 'Positively the best thing a man can have to do is nothing: and next to that perhaps good works.' His words are so vivid that they bring before us, who are his literary lovers, the little spare figure clad in black, and the harsh features of the kindly face; the sweet childlike nature and the quaint delicate humour; all of which, indeed, we love none the less dearly for having met them only in the world of books and fancies. And as I write these words there rises before me the image of another lover of leisure, evoked by the beautiful old book 'Reliquiæ Wottonianæ' that is lying open on my writing table. And this copy of 'Reliquiæ Wottonianæ' in Hurstbourne Library is in itself a thing to be handled with peculiar reverence and tenderness, for it belonged to Izaak Walton himself, the author of part, and the compiler of the other part of the book; and in it he has written his own name, and some notes, in his delicate, scholarly hand-writing. There is a tiny smudge on the flyleaf opposite his name; all these little details seem to make it more real, and to bring one closer to the dear old worthies who still live and speak and move in those pleasant pages.

Sir Henry Wotton was born, in 1568, at Bocton Hall, in Kent. His father, Thomas Wotton, married first, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Rudstone; by whom he had three sons, Sir James, Sir Edward (Lord Wotton) and Sir John. Thomas Wotton was often begged by his friends to marry

again, and, says his biographer, 'he was seriously resolved to avoid three sorts of persons, namely those that had children, that had lawsuits, that were of his kin'; and as might be expected after such a declaration, he married a lady (Mrs. Elionora Morton) who united these several disadvantages. She was the mother of Sir Henry. Henry was sent to Winchester, and thence to New College, Oxford, where, Izaak Walton tells us, 'Albericus Gentilis, then Provost of Civil Law at Oxford,' was wont 'to call him Henrice mi ocelle; which dear expression of his was also used by divers of Sir Henry's dearest friends, and by many other persons of note during his stay in the University.'

He is described to us as being 'of a choice shape,' and 'tall of stature,' and as possessing 'a most persuasive behaviour.' His picture as an old man shows us a sweet studious face, a high forehead, and kindly intelligent eyes, lit up by a grave smile.

Sir Henry spent the greater part of his early life on the Continent, partly by choice and partly by necessity. For soon after he had returned to England (after an absence for his own pleasure of nearly nine years) he was compelled to leave it again. He had been a friend and companion of Essex; and 'therefore did he, so soon as the Earl was apprehended, very quickly, and as privately, glide through Kent to Dover,' and thence across the Channel, where he lived, until 'the sweet trouble of kingly government' fell upon James I. He was kindly received by the King, and after a time of loyal service to James, Charles I., and Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, he was finally, to his great satisfaction, made Provost of Eton.

Here Sir Henry lived a life of ideal leisure, reading and thinking, entertaining hospitably his friends and neighbours, and those Eton boys who seemed to him the most promising. 'Nor did he forget his innate pleasure of angling, which he would usually call "his idle time, not idly spent."' He had lived in stirring times, and had seen the wonderful growth of thought and the development of literature of his century,

which was the century of Shakespeare and Bacon, Spenser and Raleigh. He had lived in foreign Courts, and had wandered over Europe. He had watched the march of events, 'so nimble were the times'; he had seen the kings of the earth gather and go by together, and the Invincible Armada prove 'but a morrice dance upon our waves.' Now, in his old age, he was well content to retire into the cloistered quiet of the college, which to him was 'as a quiet harbour to a seafaring man after a tempestuous voyage.'

To my mind his leisure was of all leisure the most perfect. Cowper's leisure was darkened and distraught by terrible doubts and fears; Charles Lamb's leisure was tainted by ennui, until he himself grew weary of the 'land in which it seemed always afternoon.' Ducis, the French poet, who had 'wedded the Desert, as the Doge of Venice wedded the Adriatic Sea,' and had 'cast his ring into the forests,' was saddened by the remembrance of the wife and child he had lost in bygone years. But Sir Henry, until the last few months of his life, kept 'the blessing of a cheerful heart.'

When he had, as he tells us himself, 'arrived near those years which lie in the suburbs of oblivion,' he went to revisit Winchester, where he had been at school as a little lad; and on his way home he said to his companion:

> How useful was that advice of a holy monk who persuaded his friend to perform his customary devotions in a constant place, because in that place we usually meet with those very thoughts which possessed us at our last being there; and I find it thus far experimentally true: that, at my now being in that school, and seeing that very place where I sate when I was a boy, occasioned me to remember those very thoughts of my youth which then possessed me; sweet thoughts, indeed, that promised my growing years numerous pleasures, without mixture of cares; and those to be enjoyed, when time (which I therefore thought slow-paced) had changed my youth into manhood; but age and experience have taught me that those were but empty hopes: for I have always found it true, as my Saviour did foretell, 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' Nevertheless, I saw there a succession of boys using the same recreations, and questionless possessed with the

same thoughts that possessed me. Thus one generation succeeds another, both in their lives, recreations, hopes, fears, and death.

And again, a little later, Sir Henry's biographer repeats for us his words to his friend John Hales :

> I have in my passage to my grave met with most of those joys of which a discoursive soul is capable : . . . Nevertheless in this Voyage I have not always floated on the calm sea of content ; but have often met with cross winds and storms, and with many troubles of mind and temptations to evil. And yet, though I have been and am a man compassed about with human frailties, God Almighty hath by his grace prevented me from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience ; . . . And, my dear Friend, I now see that I draw near my harbour of death ; that harbour that will secure me from all the future storms and waves of this restless world.

There is an exquisite grace and sense of fitness in Sir Henry's similes, and a very tender touch of pathos in this description of his own life. Of his writings we have but little left. Izaak Walton tells us how, a little while before he died, Sir Henry, saddened and dispirited by illness, passed many hours alone in his study, and how he burnt many papers he had written in his youth. Who knows what records of sweet fancies, what noble thoughts, and beautiful images he gave to the flames ? 'Always,' wrote Sir Henry to a friend, 'if we touch any tender matter, let us remember his motto—that wrote upon the mantel of his chimney where he was wont to keep a good fire, "Optimus Secretariorum."'

He had intended to write a life of Martin Luther, 'but in the midst of this design,' says Izaak Walton, 'his late Majesty King Charles I., that knew the value of Sir Henry Wotton's pen, did by a persuasive loving violence (to which may be added a promise of 500*l.* a year), force him to lay Luther aside, and betake himself to write the History of England.' Of this history we have only a few pages. There are several poems of his extant ; the well-known praises of the Queen of Bohemia, his 'queen of hearts' whom he

served with such loving loyalty ; the verses beginning 'How happy is he born and taught,' and a hymn which is less well known, and from which I quote a few lines :

'O precious Ransome ; which once paid,
That Consummatum Est was said :
And said by him who said no more,
But sealed it with his sacred Breath.
Thou then that hast dispung'd my Score,
And dying was the death of Death,
Be to me now, on thee I call,
My Life, my Strength, my Joy, my All.'

His private letters are delightful ; some addressed to Charles I. and to the Queen of Bohemia, others to Izaak Walton, or to the 'sweet and dear Jack Dinely,' and a large number to Sir Edmund Bacon, who had married his niece Philippa Wotton. These letters are written in a pleasant easy style, singularly free from artificial conceits, and full of graceful descriptions and epigrammatic sayings. The Count Palatine is 'a gentleman of very sweet hope,' the Lord Treasurer Weston is 'an enemy to frothy proceedings ;' it 'wrinckles' his face with care to tell Nicholas Pey that his arrears will cost him 500*l.* ; he apologises to Izaak Walton for the fact that 'a most ingenious letter of yours hath lain so long by me (as it were in lavender) without an answer.' He complains of some of his own faults, but 'it is now too late to put me in a new Furnace.' He never forgets to send a charming message to Lady Bacon when he writes to her husband Sir Edmund : 'I pray you, Sir, let me in some corner of every Letter tell my sweet Niece that I love her extreamly' ; or he sends his 'hot love to the best Niece of the World.' I myself can almost find it in my heart (loving Sir Henry as I must do perforce) to be jealous of his nieces and great-nieces, to whom he is so charming an uncle. Here is a little family gossip, written by him to Sir Edmund :

I received the Communion in St. Bartholomews on Sunday last (being Easter-Day) in the same pew with Hester and her

Mother; your Hester either becomes a little tincture of the Green Sickness well, or that becomes her well: well she looks I am sure, and in my fancy draws towards the countenance of her sister Stanhop more and more, but stealingly. My Niece Margaret is come home from her Artisan in Southwark with some pretty amendment. The manner of his cure in these imperfections is somewhat strange; he useth no bindings, but oyls and stroakings; of which I take him to be (in all my reading) both the Instrument, and the Author. My Niece Ann will prove one of the handsomest Creatures of the World; being much grown, and having rectified a little squinting or oblique look which she had in one of her eyes, so far the remainder will prove a Beauty.

These young ladies were the daughters of Thomas, second Baron Wotton, and his wife Mary Throckmorton, and they were consequently Sir Henry's grandnieces. Hester appears later to have caused Sir Henry some anxiety, for he writes to Jack Dinely: 'My Niece Hester is absolutely reclaimed from those foolish impressions which she had taken, God's name be ever blessed for it; and it is none of the least ends of my going to rivet that business.' What 'that business' was, I have not been able to discover. Hester became the third wife of Baptist, Lord Campden, the Royalist, who suffered many things in the King's cause. He raised a company of horse and foot for the King's army, and burnt his beautiful house to the ground in order to prevent the Roundheads from establishing a garrison there. He was subsequently obliged to pay 9,000*l.* composition for his estates to the Parliamentary Sequestrators, besides an annuity of 150*l.*

Margaret married Sir John Tufton; and Ann married Sir Edward Hales, of Tunstall, Kent.

In another letter Sir Henry gives an account of a certain duel, which is too characteristic of the times to be omitted.

Upon Munday was seven-night fell out another quarrel nobly carried . . . between my Lord Fielding and Mr. Goring Son and Heir to the Lord of that name. They had been the night before at Supper, I know not where, together; where Mr. Goring spake something in diminution of my Lord Weston, which my Lord

Fielding told him it could not become him to suffer. . . . There upon these hot hearts appoint a meeting next day morning, themselves alone, each upon his Horse. They pass by Hide Park, as a place where they might be parted too soon, and turn into a lane by Knightsbridge; where having tyed up their Horses at a Hedge or Gate, they got over into a Close; there stripped unto their shirts, with single Rapiers, they fell into an eager duel, till they were severed by the Host and his servants of the Prince of Orange, who by meer chance had taken some notice of them. In this noble encounter, wherein blood was spent, though (by God's Providence) not much on either side, there passed between them a very memorable interchange of a piece of courtesie, if that word may have room in this place: sayes my Lord F, Mr. Goring, If you leave me here, let me advise you not to go back by Piccadillia Hall, lest if mischance befall me and be suddenly noised (as it falleth out on these occasions now between us) you might receive some harm by some of my friends that lodge thereabouts.

My Lord (replyes Goring) I have no way but one to answer this courtesie: I have here by chance in my Pocket a Warrant to pass the Ports out of England, without a Name (gotten I suppose upon some other occasion before). If you leave me here, take it for your use and put in your own Name. This is a passage much commended between them, as proceeding both from sweetness and stoutness of spirit, which are very compatible.

This letter is dated from St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, April 18, 1633, and is addressed to Sir Edmund Bacon.

Sir Henry Wotton died at Eton in December 1639, aged seventy-one. He was buried by his desire in the College Chapel, with his well-known Latin saying, carved on a plain stone, above him.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S 'ARCADIA.'

It is interesting, as a matter of speculation, to consider which are the books of the present day that are likely to live. There is every possibility that the most popular works may not be among the number; so many books, famous in their times, have become mere names. The dust lies thick upon Miss Burney's 'Evelina' and 'Cecilia'; gentle 'Clarissa Harlowe' stretches out her pretty hands to us in vain from the top of the library shelf; nor do we care a straw whether Harriet or Olivia, Emily or Anne marries 'Sir Charles Grandison.' The day of these fair ladies is over. 'Où sont les grandes dames d'autrefois?' cries Villon. It is difficult to say what makes a book immortal; it may be that only those who have 'the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin' can survive. For those that merely reflect the passing humours of the time, life is a short and a merry one. They are read and forgotten. If they possess some unusual excellence of style, or some beauty of description, or of language, they may still keep a place in the library, high up in a dark corner, where few people care to look for them.

Such, indeed, is the fate of Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia.' I have never met anyone who could conscientiously say he had read it through. And yet it was the most popular work of its age; the book that delighted the world of English readers; the romance that appealed to their hearts. To us, as we turn listlessly over the pages, it is nothing more than an artificial and insipid idyl, utterly untrue to nature; and

yet, if we do but take the trouble to read with more attention, here, there, and everywhere (mingled with stilted phrases) we come upon exquisite sentences of lovely English, upon strange, sweet conceits, upon delightful descriptions, and quaint sayings that make us forget the rest.

For, indeed, there is a reflection of the same grace about Sir Philip's writings which must have pervaded his person, and which sets a halo even now on his memory. Of all the heroes of the Court of Queen Elizabeth, he stands prominent. Beautiful, chivalrous, accomplished, he is a perfect model of an English gentleman in the sixteenth century. He is stainless, a Chevalier Bayard, 'Sans peur et sans reproche'—the noblest and best of his noble and great generation.

John Aubrey, whose uncle, 'Mr. T. Browne,' remembered him, describes his 'dark amber hair.' 'He was not only of an excellent wit, but extremely beautiful.' And then he goes on to tell us how he wrote his 'Arcadia' at Wilton, his sister Lady Pembroke's home; and we can almost see the young man, leaving the pleasant green Wilton valley, and wandering over the grey downs which stretch like a sea in great waves for miles and miles, wrapt in that stillness which is only broken by the sound of sheep-bells, or the far-away song of larks; where the wind that blows for ever is as strong, pure, and gay as any salt sea-wind; a place, indeed, in which to write great books, and think noble thoughts. 'He was wont,' says Aubrey, 'to take his table-booke out of his pocket, and write down his notions, as they came into his head, when he was writing his Arcadia (which was never finished by him) as he was hunting on our pleasant plaines.'

Sir Philip had retired from Court in 1580, and is said to have written the 'Arcadia' then, 'a book,' as one of his biographers calls it, 'most famous for rich conceits, and splendor of courtly expressions'; and the same writer goes on to say that it is 'a Continual Grove of Morality, shadowing Moral and Political Results under the plain and easy Emblems of Lovers.'

It is dedicated to his sister, 'most dear, and worthy to be most dear, lady,' as Sir Philip calls her; and in the dedication he says: 'Your dear self can best witness the manner, being done in loose sheets of paper, most of it in your presence; the rest by sheets sent unto you as fast as they were done.'

Sir Philip Sidney was the son of Sir Henry Sidney. His mother was Mary, eldest daughter of John, Duke of Northumberland, and he was born in 1554, at Penshurst, being called Philip, so it is said, after the King of Spain, who was married in that year to Queen Mary of England. He had two brothers, Sir Robert, afterwards created Earl of Leicester, and Sir Thomas; and one sister, Mary, the second wife of Henry, Earl of Pembroke.

A FEW PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF MR. LOWELL

Now that the world is made poorer by the loss of James Russell Lowell, it seems natural that we should call to mind little recollections of him—reminiscences trifling in themselves, no doubt, yet, all the same, reminiscences of his kindness, his gaiety, his interest in men and women.

I remember meeting him at Oxford when an honorary degree of D.C.L. was conferred upon Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes and upon Mr. John Bright. Mr. Lowell was in the gayest of spirits, and the conversation between him, Mr. Robert Browning, and the Master of Balliol, our host, was brilliant. Two Spanish gentlemen came in the evening, and Mr. Lowell greeted them in their own tongue. He was master of many languages. His collection of old French writers was one of the best in the world. Nor was he less well acquainted with modern French authors. I remember well the care he took in recommending to me one of Balzac's novels that should give me an idea of the great writer's manner and should yet 'be no shock' to me. And so upon his advice I read 'Eugénie Grandet'—the most touching history of a jewel of purity and goodness in a mean and sordid setting. He told me that Thackeray had asked him once for his candid opinion of the novel 'Henry Esmond,' begging him to point out any mistake he might detect in the English of the reign of Queen Anne. Mr. Lowell answered that there was one thing he thought wrong: did anybody then ever use the phrase 'different *to*' such a thing?

'Hang it all!' cried Thackeray. 'No; of course they didn't!'

I travelled back to London from Oxford under Mr. Lowell's escort. I remember his looking at the bean-fields as we flew by them in the train; they were then in blossom, and he said that the smell of them to him was one of the sweetest of scents, and that he wondered why it was mentioned by so few poets, whilst reference to the smell of lime-blossom is common enough. I fancy that Mr. Lowell himself has spoken of the scent of bean-fields in one of his poems. William Morris also mentions it, and one old poet of Elizabethan or Jacobean date; but these are all the instances I can call to mind.

The last time I saw Mr. Lowell was in August 1888. He was looking ill then, and I thought he seemed silent and depressed.

His letters were charming, written in a little delicate pointed hand that would formerly have been called feminine, but cannot be called so now that women write in great round strong characters. Three of his letters are lying open beside me—three only! Ah! why does one so often lose and waste letters that would be such treasures in the years to come, when 'the hand that writ them is dust'; when they are 'turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the crystals of tears'?

From two of these letters I make extracts. The first refers to an Italian book which he sent me, having promised me two, one of which was, as it afterwards appeared, out of print.

> To keep one promise out of two, and to have tried to keep the other, is not precisely virtue, but at least does not add to the pavement which such as you will never tread.
>
> I have remembered to send off the Italian book of which I spoke, and hope it may be of some use to you. It starts Parcel Post to-morrow.

The other letter was written to a young lady about to be married. Mr. Lowell had been staying in the same

house with her at the time that her marriage was settled, and she had fancied he must have noticed what was going on.

It pleased me very much that you should have remembered me in your happiness and wished me to share in it. I do most heartily, and all the more because this tie you are making connects you (however remotely) with New England.[1]

And so you fancied that I had divined what was going on while we were at Highclere together? That was very pretty and natural of you, and doesn't surprise me, since I have always found you so.

Because you had entered into the great conspiracy of nature, you thought everybody must suspect; you feared each bush an officer. But no; I was blinder than a bat—for a bat is blind only at the behest of alliteration, and I was so through the whole alphabet impartially. No. You held your secret as tight as a rosebud.

I wish you joy with all my heart, and all the happiness which I am sure you deserve.

These are the fragments that I am able to contribute. At best they are but trifling fragments; but it may be that perhaps some lover of his books, who never met him in that other world of men, may catch between the poor lines I have written a glimpse of what I can never express—the childlike gaiety, the brilliancy, and the charm of the man who has written his name in so many hearts here and across the sea.

[1] Muriel Gurdon married Richard Saltonstall, who was the eldest son of Sir Richard Saltonstall, one of the founders of Boston, and who, according to Bancroft, was the first man who ever raised his voice against slavery in the United States.

HURSTBOURNE : 1887

I FEEL very sad about the Master [of Balliol] ; he has been, I fear, very ill, although he will not own to it. He sits silent in his armchair, trying to follow the doctor's prescription to do nothing, and sighs from time to time ; and if you speak to him, he answers with a sad, sweet little smile, and then goes back to his own thoughts. He talks of his illness as very slight, yet he knows that you feel it is not slight, and that you only speak lightly of it to comfort him. He told me of his visit to Sir William Gull ; and he admired the doctor's rhetoric, which, he added, must be the result of long practice arising from the desire to reassure his patients, and to place matters in the most favourable light. Sir William Gull, he said, confirmed Sir Benjamin Brodie's assertion that scarcely anybody dreads death when it comes ; 'it is only in health we fear it,' he said, and then he looked very wistfully at me. I think that his mind dwells a great deal on Death, and that he is sorry to think it may come so soon. Once, some years ago, at Oxford, when we were walking in Addison's Walk, he told me that he should be very sorry to die, 'although my life has not been a happy one,' he said. He spoke yesterday to me of the great social changes that are coming, and 'it will be very interesting to see them ; a very interesting thing in *your* life,' he added, correcting himself. It seems such a pity that I cannot give him my share of life ; I cannot feel any personal attachment to it ; and I think he would enjoy it, if it were only to see the coming changes, the last thing in the world I feel keen about

staying for. All the beautiful childlike side of his nature comes out now so simply ; the ironical, critical Head of the College is gone, and nothing remains but a gentle, kindly, tired, little old gentleman.

To-day I drove him through the green lanes by Long-parish ; lanes that have clear streams and cool, lush water meadows on either side, and that lead through the depths of Wherwell Wood to the great breezy fields on the uplands. He was very silent, and it was borne in upon me that he was thinking, regretfully, of the cold shadows that one day, any day, might blot out for him all this world of sunshine.

Verses

'LETTY'

PALE, my dear, very pale and pretty,
With eyes of crystallized blue,
Most like, my dear, as I fancy,
To a speedwell covered with dew.

Hair, my dear, like the yellow wheat,
Hair that would always wave,
And a little mouth as fresh, as sweet
As this rose that grows on her grave.

A voice, my dear, like a singing bird—
It is ringing now in my ears—
And a smile that was so sweet, so sweet,
It comes back through the dreary long years.

December 1873.

ODDS AND ENDS

You and I must make our parting,
  Life is different now, we see ;
Once we thought the world and sunshine
  Only made for you and me.
We are wiser now, we know :
Kiss me, dear, and let me go.

What if all this new-found wisdom
  Give a sense of void and pain ?
We have learnt the life's great lesson,
  You and I will not complain.
Truth is better ; time will show :
Kiss me, dear, and let me go.

Never more, on April morning,
  Shall we wander through the world,
Through the green ways fringed with king-cups
  And the crisp fern quaintly curled ;

. . . .

SPRING

In the violet time
  Of the beautiful year
I went a-wandering
  In the woods with my Dear.
Over the cuckoo-buds
  We twain went together,
Through God's quiet woods,
  In the sweet spring weather.

February 1875.

PATIENT GRISELDA

So thou wouldst have us part, my love!
All hope for me is past,
Yet, though it broke my heart, I'd be
Obedient to the last.
I ever was unworthy thee,
But yet how great my love can be!
Time, I think, will never show it;
Thou, alas! canst never know it.
My heart was proud, but yet for thee
Alone it fain would humble be;
For loving thee as I love none beside,
I find no room, no place, no heart, for pride.

December 1873.

RIGHT HON. E. H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN (AFTERWARDS LORD BRABOURNE) TO LADY CAMILLA WALLOP

DEAR Lady Camilla,
I'm tempted to fill a
Whole sheet with extravagant rhymes,
To thank you for sending
(My need thus befriending)
The 'Western,' or 'Exeter Times.'
I thank, too, your mother
For letting me bother
Her kindness with such a request;
A lesson this teaches:
'A man who makes speeches
Ne'er welcome again as your guest.'
Such lesson, though, out on!
For how could then Houghton
To Devonshire ever come down
Your faces to brighten
And minds to enlighten
With all the last 'bon mots' of town?
What gems lite-rary
That nobleman wary
Did scatter abroad 'mid the crowd:
To audience adoring
(Though *partially* snoring)
His canticles reading aloud.

And then our good Cory
(By no means a Tory)
On matters scholastic could preach,
And Lyn (done his task with
The excellent Asquith) [1]
Was never deficient in speech.
Then 'talkers' don't banish,
Or with them would vanish
Some friends you'd be sorry to lose :
Though if 'last year's oration'
They ask, indignation
May prompt you, next time, to refuse.
Oh ! Lady Camilla,
I've been out to kill a
Supply of fresh game for the house ;
The day has been dreary,
And wet, cold, and weary :
I shiver and shake like a mouse.
Now, does a mouse shiver,
Unless in a river
Or pond it has happened to fall ?
I'm ignorant, wholly,
And took the word solely
To fill up my lyrical scrawl.
I write in a hurry,
And ain't it a worry
When rhymes, being wanted, ain't there ?
I'd leave off at once,
But you'd term me a dunce,
And for such a remark I should care.
Nine letters I've finished ;
My task is diminished,
As, Lady Camilla, you'll own,
If this, the tenth letter,
Don't say that I'd better
Have left it discreetly alone.

[1] Mr. Asquith, afterwards Secretary of State, was at the time private tutor to Viscount Lymington.

As I am a Briton,
One more must be writ on
This eve, e'er my task I conclude,
So farewell if I'm saying,
I'm earnestly praying
You'll deem my abruptness *not* rude.
If you I to tire meant,
Or if your requirement
Crave more of such rhymes from my pen,
I'd scribble you double,
Nor find it much trouble,
To spin my *one* sheet into ten.
But since I'm afraid I
Have tired you, young Lady
(A thing of itself scarcely right),
No more will I chatter,
But stop din and clatter,
And wish you a very good night!

Smeeth: December 14, 1875.

LADY CAMILLA WALLOP TO THE RIGHT HON. E. H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN

DEAR Mr. Hugéssen,
I think your new lesson,
Of inviting no speakers again,
Is of malice prepense,
And in every sense
Most decidedly wrong in the main.
For well we remember
Last year's gay December
(The thought of it cheers us up yet),
And for me what a pleasure
To receive such a treasure,
For sending the 'Western Gazette.'
But the post will not wait,
So, with much love to Kate,
And with very best thanks, I must stop;
As my rhymes will diminish,
I feel I must finish,
And remain, E. Camilla Wallóp.

Eggesford House: December 15, 1875.

THE GOSPEL OF SUFFERING

I

BENEATH Thy Cross, O Lord, I kneel,
As thousands must have knelt before,
To give back what I dearly loved,
And what I know is mine no more.

Forgive me, Lord, if blinded, dazed,
I groped in darkness for a space,
Till through the unknown depths there shone
The smile upon Thy dying face.

I turned, heart-weary, very faint,
Too tired to utter words of prayer,
Yet dimly feeling through my pain
That all is well if Thou be there.

And now I know this suffering world
Has yet some touch of Hope divine,
For on the heights of Calvary
The everlasting Beacons shine.

II

NOT now, O Lord, but yet one day
On these faint lips shall be
A blessing on the lonely road
That led my steps to Thee.

Thou hast my treasure and my heart
In safest keeping stored ;
My poor vain dreams, exceeding sweet,
I leave them with my Lord.

In Thee are all our burning tears
Transfigured, glorified ;
The God whom weeping we adore
Is Christ the Crucified.

So, in the anguish of our Love,
And passion of our Loss,
The sign we press to trembling lips
Is Christ upon His Cross.

July 24, 1880.

MARCH

THE rooks were cawing on the windy heights,
And over rounded hills the strong keen lights
Were driving tide-like shadows into space ;
And, in the sheltered walk you loved to pace,
The cagéd wind that sometimes came and went
Had stirred the heart-shaped violet leaves, and bent
The daphne boughs, and filled the air with scent.

The building sparrows scolded in the eaves,
When winds ran shudd'ring through the ivy leaves ;
Beneath the fretted wall of time-stained red
The poor old dog had found a sunny bed,
And followed you with wistful loving eyes
Until the last light touched the grassy rise,
And rooks were circling in the windy skies.

To-night, o'er dewy lawns, the blackbirds sing,
And teach my absent heart that once more Spring,
With all the pathos of its joy, is near.
But you are dead and gone ; and though I hear
The gay birds piping in the almond bloom,
The house is hushed, and in the deepening gloom
The dog creeps mournfully from room to room.

FLORENCE

No more those strips of springing wheat,
Nor olive orchards silver-grey,
Nor cypress crowning lucent hills
Beneath the broad Italian day,
Shall I behold ; but arching lanes,
And cowslip fields, and tender grass,
And cool full streams with waving weeds,
Where cloudy shadows stop and pass ;
And beechen woods, and silent downs ;
And far away a moist blue rim
Of distance, closing in a world
Of pallid colours, vague and dim.
But here or there, I bear with me
One scene engraven on my heart :
The long white bed, the patient face,
The last long look before we part.

April 1888.

FROM EDGEHILL TO COMPTON WYNYATES

We drove along the lonely ridge
  Last night towards the edge of dark.
A single star in tranquil skies
  Shone white above the dreaming park ;

And over all the shadowy plain
  Of empty fields and fading trees
The darkness slowly crept and filled
  The dewy hollows of the leas,

From the pale gold of dying elms
  And auburn of the beeches drew
The radiant tints, and gently hid
  The unknown woods of misty blue.

Then, as we journeyed in the dusk,
  And heard the wild owls hoot and cry
From moss-grown barns and haggard trees,
  Our talk was all of things gone by ;

Until we almost seemed to see
  Lord Essex lead his troops again,
And hear the thund'ring crash and thud
  Of Rupert's horsemen on the plain.

November 1890.

Miscellaneous Stories

AN OLD DEVONSHIRE WOMAN

ELIZABETH, or, as she was called, 'Lizbuth' Webber was our dairymaid in Devonshire when I was a child. I fancy I can see her now, strong and well made, with pretty rippling hair parted and combed down on either side of her fresh hearty face; and with honest kindly blue eyes, and a large but pleasant mouth. She must have been about six-and-thirty when I first remember her in the old child days; when I used to slip away, and run up to the cowshed on Saturday afternoons in the spring, and would try to milk Blossom, the quietest cow, into the cover of the milk-pail, or would climb up into the warm scented hay, and watch Lizbuth at her work. Through the open door I could see the soft red mud trodden down by the cows, the green slope sprinkled with daisies, and the brown beech hedge with its pale fringe of primroses; and beyond that the tall fir-trees tapering off against the blue sky. Lizbuth used to bring me large bunches of daffodils, and faint periwinkles which would never revive in water, in spite of all my efforts, and boughs of silver blackthorn, and spikes of reddish-brown wallflower, which in those days we called 'Bloody warriors.' I loved to listen to the sharp sound of the milk dripping into the pails, and to the voice of the wild birds in the woods without, each with a different song in its throat, and full of that ineffable hopefulness which makes young people so happy in spring, and older people so sad. Sometimes an inquisitive little pig, smelling the sweet warm milk, would stick in his inquiring snout at the door, and when Lizbuth

waved her apron at him, would rush off squealing as though he were half murdered. Or a tiny robin-redbreast would hop on the threshold, and put his dainty head on one side and peer at us out of his round eyes.

When our summer holidays began we used to make Lizbuth call us at half-past five in the morning, and go with her across the dewy field to fetch the cows, and after having 'helped' her to milk them we would come home in triumph with the brimming pails to the dairy, where Lizbuth scalded the cream and made the butter according to the Devonshire custom. She stirred round the clotted cream in a wooden bowl, with a wooden mallet, from left to right, following the course of the sun. For if it were stirred from right to left it would turn into oil, and not into butter. So Lizbuth told us.

'Have you ever seen it turn to oil?' we asked with awe-struck faces.

'No,' Lizbuth would answer; it was a very wicked thing to try to do, and always brought ill-luck, but she had 'heard tell on some wan as did,' and ''twas tur-ble' (terrible).

On cold mornings, when the butter 'would not come,' Lizbuth used to let us turn up our sleeves, and use our hands instead of the mallet; a process we dearly loved. Then we could feel the soft rich cream thickening, and thickening, until the sweet butter-milk oozed out, and the butter itself stood upright, a pale yellow heap in the centre of the tub.

Lizbuth had a store of tales about cows and chickens, of which we never wearied. She could also tell (although very reluctantly, for it was not right to talk of such things) wonderful stories of white witches, of cattle that were 'overlooked,' *i.e.* bewitched; and of a poor child 'down to Simmunses' that was 'wisht' and was pining away. It was from Lizbuth that I gleaned the valuable information that a robin 'weeting or chirping at the window foretells a death in the house, and that to have luck with your peas and

beans, you should sow them on Good Friday.' She used to charm away our warts by rubbing them three times with a bean, which she then buried in the earth. As the bean decayed in the ground, so would the wart dwindle away.

There was a story of Lizbuth's childhood which we dearly loved: how, when Lizbuth was a little girl, there was the deepest fall of snow ever known in Devonshire, and how for weeks and weeks the roads were impassable. Men and women and children, besides scores of wretched animals, were lost in that snow, and never heard of again. There was a farm-labourer in Lizbuth's village, who was missing on the first day of the snow, and his wife and children sought him in vain. But when the thaw came he was found dead in a ditch.

Elizabeth was a constant attendant at the village chapel, and might be seen every Sunday morning, dressed in a certain purple-shot linsey gown which we had given her, a black bonnet with a crimson rose, and a large three-cornered shawl, tramping steadily over the big rough stones. She had a fresh sweet voice, although it was somewhat nasal, and she used to sing 'Happy Land,' and 'Beyond, beyond the river,' in a way which had a peculiar charm for me. To my mind there is something strangely sweet and stirring in that school of hymns—something that I miss in the more cultivated verses, that I seek for in vain in the modern hymns, but yet which I find in some of Faber's, and one or two others. Keble's lines fail to touch me; they are not hymns, but rather devotional poems, the outcome of a peculiarly refined, sensitive mind; but they have not in them the intensely human cry from the depths of the heart for the God who is God and man; none of the yearning for, and personal fellowship with, Him who was despised and rejected, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; none of that passion of hope which bears up men and women through joyless lives of want and misery. Such hymns as 'Jesu, lover of my soul,' 'Paradise, oh, paradise,' and the 'Sweet by-and-by,' are hymns of the people. They

appeal to them directly, and, like the melodies to which these words are set, can be understood by any child.

Sometimes, on Sunday evenings in the summer, there would be an out-of-door meeting at Broadbury, and the members of the little chapel would sing hymns in the open air. I used to stand on the edge of the fir-plantation and listen, hidden behind a white fir-stem, to the far-off sound of voices, singing in unison songs of the dearly-loved country, as the tones, full of longing and pathos, rose and fell on the fluttering wings of the faint evening wind.

So the days and years crept on in my quiet life, until I grew up, and then came a great change. Bad harvests, losses of money, failure of county banks followed closely upon each other, and bit by bit our plans reluctantly resolved themselves: the dear old place must be sold, and we must live abroad, travelling like genteel vagrants from one cheap town to another for two years or more, when we would finally settle in London. Our first care was to find places for the old servants in other households. And accordingly for Lizbuth, with some difficulty, a situation in a family living in London was heard of. We did not feel satisfied with the place, and my heart sank when I thought of Lizbuth, who had dwelt all her days in the fresh air, among the quiet fields, being suddenly plunged into the smoke and turmoil of a great city. But we had no choice, and Lizbuth bravely made up her mind to face the change. 'They zay,' she said, speaking cheerfully, but yet with the tears unbidden rising to her eyes, 'that 'tes allers in London like to Broadbury to market days; 'tes the liveliest place was ever ordained!'

I remember well the last morning we spent at our old home. It was a still day in the beginning of November. The woods on the round swelling hills were soft grey and pinkish brown, like the breast of a dove. Great beaded drops were hanging to the moist hedgerows. A wet breeze from the south-west was stirring the trees; I could just hear the sough of the fir-branches, and the gentle wail of

the wind lifting the ivy-leaves on the walls. A man was ploughing the narrow fields on the uplands, and the air was full of the smell of the newly-turned sod. The rapid river was dim and swollen with last night's rain, and there was a line of wet blue distance on the edge of the sober sky. There were a few autumn violets and some pink and white chrysanthemums in the garden, and all along one angle of the house a winter jasmine was flowering, like a tree of the primroses children paint, starry little blots of vivid yellow. I was picking, sadly enough, my last nosegay, when I heard my name called, and turning round I saw Elizabeth, dressed in her Sunday clothes, and clasping in her arms a huge cotton umbrella, which was literally enjoying a green old age, having once upon a time in its youth set up pretensions to being black. She was not crying, but there was a harassed look in her eyes, and in spite of all her courage her lips were trembling piteously.

'"Tes to zay "gude-bye," my dear, dear young lady; and may God bless you, and bring you zafe home once more.' Then we parted, and I stood watching her down the hill until the three-cornered shawl and the black bonnet could be seen no more. But the thought of her haunted me long after. I could not bear to think of the poor old woman in the bustling streets; and yet I fancied continually I could see her, helpless and jostled by the throng, standing squarely with her big market-basket and her umbrella, so as to block at least half the pavement in her innocent ignorance, and looking out of bewildered eyes at the sea of unknown faces. She could not write herself, but once, about a month after she left Broadbury, she sent us a message by a former fellow-servant, to say that she was 'doing tolerable,' although she missed us 'cruel bad.' We went abroad, and heard no more tidings of her, though from time to time we used to write to her.

There is this strange mockery in life, that when we are given what we most ardently desired, it often becomes a burden, a very millstone round our necks. I who had longed

all my life to travel, now hated it. I turned from the bright colours and the brilliant sunshine of Southern life, and pined for the 'misty-moisty' days and the soft dim weather of the dear west country. I was bitterly homesick. Once in a foreign town, as I was buying a bunch of magnificent yellow roses and heliotrope (from a ragged girl, with a brown oval face, and deep pathetic eyes), I heard behind me, 'Maister Jan, Maister Jan! Com' back, I tell 'ee,' and I saw an English woman, a west-country woman, as I knew by her accent, endeavouring to catch her runaway charge, an unmistakably English child, dressed in unmistakably English clothes. I threw down the roses and heliotrope, and dashed towards them just as the maid had captured 'Maister Jan.' 'Are you a west-country woman?' I cried breathlessly. She eagerly welcomed a fellow countrywoman; and as she stood talking in her homely voice, I could almost fancy, after a blind, self-deluding fashion, that I was 'home to Broadbury' once more.

It was a relief to be in smoky London. I did my best to find Lizbuth, but to my dismay she had left her old situation about six months before my return, and nobody knew anything about her.

'She was too ill to do the work when she left,' said the parlour-maid, of whom I was making my inquiries. 'I wrote for her to the ladies as she used to live with, but I don't think as how I rightly directed the letter, for there come no answer.'

I turned away sick at heart, at a loss to know what to do. I had not the smallest clue to finding her, and gave up the search after many futile efforts.

One day, in spring, when even the dull streets look cheerful, and when the plane-trees in the parks and squares are putting forth pale green buds, I went to pay a visit to a large hospital, taking with me some bluebells and primroses and crab-apple blossom that a kind friend had sent me from Devonshire. I tied up the flowers into little nosegays, and edged them with tender ferns. My friend had sent me

a thousand of those little green odds and ends that grow in sheltered lanes, and that, somehow or other, do not generally come up to town—the delicate fringe of the earthnut, celandine leaves, spotted like a snake's skin, and dainty blades of grass.

I went first to the children's wards. They were old friends of mine. There was the little boy who had suffered all his little life, and who did not know how to smile; yet when you asked him to smile he would do his best to please you, by lifting up his patient white face to be kissed. There was the sporting baby, in bed with a broken leg, whose great pleasure lay in a headless, tailless 'gee-gee,' which was made to 'gallop' over his bed, taking the wrinkles in the bed-clothes as fences. And by his side was the little wasted creature who always had a sweet pleasant look to greet you with, as he lay wearily back on his pillow, too tired to talk, but liking, in his sad quiet way, to see the fresh flowers. I found I had still some to spare, and the matron asked me whether I would care to go to the women's wards. I followed her into a large cheerful room. It was the day on which the friends of patients were admitted, and almost every bed had a little group round it. I saw, however, one lonely bed at the far end of the room, and drew near, with some flowers in my hand. Was it my fancy? could it be Lizbuth? or was it the ghost of her former self? The woman, whoever she was, lifted her sad eyes, which had been patiently gazing into space, and looked at me. Then I knew she was Lizbuth, and I ran to the bedside with both my hands out. Her worn face lit up, and she made an effort to sit up. 'My dear, dear lady,' she said, 'I never thought I should see you!' I knelt down by her, and we talked in little broken sentences. She took up the Devonshire flowers in her wrinkled hands, and I saw a great tear splash down on them. I knew how homesick she must have been, though she told me nothing about it in words. Ah! did I not know myself the unutterable longing, the weariness, the heartache of it all?

The time slipped away unheeded by us both, and the matron came to tell me that I must go. I promised that I would come on the morrow. Lizbuth smiled faintly: 'Maybe you mightn't vind me here; a be very nigh to the Land's End.'

My voice failed me, but at the door of the ward I turned round to take a last look. Her face wore an air of unspeakable peace, and her tired hands were folded, resting on the bunch of flowers.

That was the last time I saw her alive. When I came again, she had left the 'Land's End' far behind her, and had reached the haven where she would be.

ON THE MOORS.

It was a soft grey morning in February. The air was warm and damp, and the sky was covered with dull clouds. The village women were coming to buy milk at the dairy, tramping through the rich red-brown mud on clattering pattens, and dressed in short print dresses and lilac sun-bonnets. One of them carried a child in her arms, while another clung to her gown and pattered along at her side. I stopped to look at her. She was tall and pale, with a sweet but anxious face, which reminded me of a Madonna in one of the homely pictures of some Dutch painter. The child in her arms was wasted to a shadow; a poor, faded little thing with large unearthly eyes looking out of a sad white face. But the boy beside her was a rosy young person, such as it is a pleasure to behold.

'Is your baby ill?' I asked of the woman.

She answered in her high-pitched voice and soft Devonshire accent that the little girl had always been ailing, and that although she was six years old she was scarcely bigger than a child of two. 'Us gets no sleep to nights, for her be-ath never warm night nor day; and her crieth "Hale (cover) me up, mammy, hale me up!" all the night thru.'

And then I gathered from her that the one blanket the poor cottage possessed was devoted to the use of the sick child.

Meanwhile the little boy had been looking about him eagerly; and just at this moment the scullery-maid came

out of the kitchen with a big bowl of sopped bread and Indian corn, and began calling to the chickens, 'Coop, coop, coop!' and the fowls hastened from all parts, with neck and wings outstretched, and long hurrying legs, and sharp greedy bills. The little fellow ran towards them.

'Oh, doey lay an egg for sister!' he cried imploringly, 'doey lay an egg for sister!' His mother pulled him back and scolded him in the rough but not unkind way that cottage women often use toward their children.

'Where be your manners, Jan?' she said; 'you mun bide to home, Jan, if you don't mind your manners.'

The child shrank abashed behind her gown, and stuck a timid thumb into his red mouth.

'The poor little maid,' explained his mother, 'ates eggs with a relish. 'Tis cruel hard to get mun to touch aught. And so, when the hen to home layeth an egg 'tes allers kept for she; and Jan, when he see the hen a-com into the kitchen, mun saith, "Doey lay an egg for sister." He liketh eggs, too, I warrant, but would allers take and give his'n to sister.'

Half a dozen eggs for the sick child delighted the woman and children, and I added a large piece of bread-and-butter for Jan, which he began eating there and then, biting exactly in the middle, like the hatter in 'Alice in Wonderland,' so as to leave a buttery smudge on both dimpled cheeks.

After that day it rained for a week, after the fashion of our west-country weather; soft white rain that floated over the hills and woods like a cloud. On the seventh day I thought I would ride to Speke's End, where the poor woman had told me she lived, and take some little dainty to the sick child. I galloped through the steaming air, and between the high close banks of the dripping lanes, until I came to a lonely stretch of moors, where the grass is tawny-coloured and scant, and where the ground is black and treacherous-looking. It is pleasant enough on the moors in summer, when the place is sweet with gorse and heather,

and a thousand and one delicate marsh flowers and grasses are in bloom; but it looked a land of desolation in the waning winter light. My horse and I picked our way carefully, as any ill-considered step might have plunged us into some bog, or 'pucksie,' as we call the unexpected soft veins of clay, where a spring suddenly bubbles up in a cart-track. Two or three colts came up round me, tossing their heads and neighing, and a peewit flew overhead, calling his own name in a sad wild voice. There was no other living creature to be seen far and wide, but in the hollow of the moor, on the edge of a great wood, stood a tumble-down mud cottage with a thatch roof, and this I knew to be where the sick child lived. There was a strip of untidy garden before the door, in which might be seen some gaunt frost-bitten cabbages standing on tall yellow stems, a row of potatoes, and two leafless currant-bushes. In the warm corner, close to the porch, a bunch of snowdrops were pushing up their white faces, still bandaged in green, and the sword-like leaves of the 'lenticups,' or daffodils, were piercing the clods of earth. A rapid little stream divided the garden from the damp wood of dark firs and brown oaks. The clammy mist seemed to be wrapped round the little habitation like a winding-sheet. I thought I had never seen such a sad and God-forgotten place.

I dismounted and tied my horse to a stake in the hedge and knocked at the door. There came no answer. I gently pushed it open and looked into the cheerless kitchen. Two or three fowls were picking and scratching on the paved floor. The long table was still covered with remains of eatables; some cabbage, a jug of cider, and a few greasy crumbs of bread. Over the chimney-piece had been pasted—by way of decoration—several pieces of different coloured wall-paper, and a smoke-begrimed calendar of three years back. The straight old clock was ticking loudly and deliberately in a corner next to the kitchen dresser. Several of the mossy panes in the little window had been broken, and rags and bits of newspaper had been stuffed into the

cracks to keep out the air. The gleams from a smouldering wood fire lit up the comfortless hearth, where Jan was seated on a three-legged stool, nursing his little sister as he best could on his tiny knees. The little wan face was leaning again his rosy cheek, and his round arms were tenderly hugging the meagre little form. He was swaying gently to and fro, and singing to her in a shrill childish voice. The two small people were all alone in the desolate cottage; yet neither seemed to feel their loneliness.

'Mother be gone to Colleigh Town,' Jan said in answer to my inquiries. Colleigh, which he was pleased to dignify with the name of town, was a little hamlet about a mile distant from Speke's End. It could boast of a single shop, whose owner was baker, grocer, and linendraper in one. I opened my basket, which had been slung on my pommel, and took out the orange jelly I had brought with me. The little boy fetched a saucer, and a not altogether immaculate spoon.

'Would you like to taste a bit?' I asked.

For one moment, one little moment, he hesitated; and then with a quick smile, and wistful shake of his head: 'Sister had best ate mun all.'

I began to try to feed the sick child, but she would not touch anything except from her brother's hand. He propped up the tired head very carefully on his arm, and put the spoon persuasively to her mouth:

'Doey ate mun, doey, sister.' And the little pale lips parted, and the wasted arm clung lovingly round his neck as she steadied herself to taste what he gave her. And as I watched the two children it seemed to me that the sadness of the moors and the poverty and wretchedness of the cottage had faded away, and that I could see the poor hearth lit and transfigured by the simple affection of the little brother and sister. Love, the great master, had, with one single touch of his hand, beautified the squalid cottage into a dwelling-place meet for him. As of old, when he 'smote on all the chords'—

'Self, . . . trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.'

And then the dull, hard, every-day life is hallowed and ennobled.

That evening, when I had changed my wet clothes, I went into the cosy drawing-room at home, and sat down upon the broad ledge before the crackling fire and watched the orange flames leaping from one spluttering branch to another, and returning to lick the great dry log with their forked tongues. The kettle was singing to itself a little song about warm tea and quiet evenings; and one of my sisters was seated on a low chair, sorting brilliant-coloured worsteds in the firelight—purple, red, yellow, blue, lavender, and those heather mixtures which have a little of every colour in them. My youngest sister at the pianoforte was idly passing from one chord to another, following no melody, but only letting her hands slip over the notes as they pleased. Presently the tones grew more defined, and she began to sing one of Hamilton Aïdé's beautiful songs set to Blumenthal's exquisite music.

There are some voices which go through and through one, whose notes touch some unknown springs in one's heart, and bring unawares the foolish tears to one's eyes. Sylvia's pleading, searching tones rose and fell in the dim silent room, and the melody seemed to take my thoughts by the hand and lead them through the aching, toiling world to a place of old remembrances and quiet dreams. Ah! how is it that such young, thoughtless natures have sometimes the power to shadow forth in music such unknown depths of pathos, of suffering, of relief.

'Every day a pilgrim blindfold,
When the night and morning meet,
Entereth the slumbering city,
Stealeth down the silent street—
Ling'reth round some battered doorway,
Leaves, unblest, some portal grand,
And the walls where sleep the children
Toucheth with his warm young hand.
Love is passing, Love is passing,
Passing while ye lie asleep:
In your blessed dreams, O children,
Give him all your hearts to keep.'

As the sweet refrain—'Love is passing'—came over and over again, my mind travelled back to the little brother and sister on the moor, and then I thought of the love Divine which encompasseth the whole length and breadth of this great suffering world: the Love which we, even in our darkness and ignorance, yearn after, although, maybe, we know it not; the Love that makes the very pain and poverty of this 'working-day world' Divine; the Love which Christ came down on earth to teach to those whose hearts are as the hearts of little children.

GERTRUDE

YESTERDAY there was a dense autumn fog all day; one of those penetrating, clinging fogs, which chill and depress one, and make one almost disbelieve that such things as summer and sunshine have ever existed. I was all alone in the old Manor House, and I wandered through the grey dismantled rooms, where the ghostly furniture is shrouded in sheets and huddled together in the corners, leaving a solemn space of bare boards in the centre. I recognised an old workbox of mine on one of the tables, and I began to sort and arrange the odds and ends I found in it. There was a wrinkled Tonkin bean, an agate thimble, an emery cushion in the shape of an acorn, and a faded pink silk needle-book. As I opened the needle-book, a letter dropped from it and fell to the ground. I picked it up, and suddenly, as I looked at it through the grey shadows and the dimness of the autumn day, there rose up before me the vision of a sweet rosy face, fresh as a bunch of lilacs wet with April dew, and with the sunshine of careless happiness smiling out of the bright eyes. This was the letter. I place it before you in its entirety, as far as print can render it. The straggling handwriting, the horrid smudges, the crumpled folds cannot be expressed in words :—

'Wensday.

'Dearest Anne,—I am quite alone at home, because Papa and Mama are gone to Southampton. Do come and help me to Keep house. I am reading Political Ecomy

(*I think she meant Political Economy*) and it is so interesting. Do come.

'Your loving

'GERTUDE.

'P.S. I will come and call for you in the carriage.'

I counted up the blots. They were three in number, and the whole letter was smudged. Evidently no attempt whatever at blotting it had been made. It had been crumpled up, wet as it was, and poked into the first envelope that came to hand, which happened in this instance to be a large official-looking blue envelope lined with linen. And now we come to the most shocking part of the whole affair—there was a dab of black sealing-wax on the cover, which had undoubtedly been sealed with the human thumb.

This little old letter brought back a long chain of memories to my mind. I remembered that I had received that disgraceful note, many years ago, on a fine spring morning; and that I had scarcely had time to glance at it before I heard the crunch of carriage wheels on the gravel—a noise as of a very fairly heavy young person jumping out—a furious peal at the bell, and then the scudding sound of two feet and a quantity of drapery hurrying up the passage. My sitting-room door flew open, and Miss Gertrude herself rushed in.

This student of political economy was dressed most untidily in a tumbled green cotton gown, with a brown hat hanging at the back of her head, and an ugly old grey shawl bundled up round her pretty throat, fastened all askew with a diamond brooch. Her white silk neckerchief had slipped round to the back of her neck, her black kid gloves were a mere wreck, and her nose was poking through a hole in her net veil.

She whirled me away with her in her little carriage. I can distinctly recall a feeling of uneasiness as we dashed past carts and waggons; and once, when for no apparent reason

we bumped over twenty successive mud-heaps at the side of a wide smooth road, I ventured to expostulate gently, my driver was so busy repeating to me a remarkable passage in 'Sordello,' that she paid no heed either to my suggestions or to the jolting of the carriage. Overhead the sky was of a pure soft blue, with little fleecy clouds floating about in it; the broad meadows by the river were yellow with buttercups, and the trees were covered with the first fresh green of tender young leaves. The air was full of spring scents —the smell of the blossoming hedgerows, of the moist earth, of the sticky spikes of horse-chestnut flowers shining out of the dark foliage like Christmas candles, and of the lilacs and monthly roses in the cottage gardens. In the cool depths of the hazel copses the nightingale was singing as though his heart would break for joy; and in the spaces where the wood had been cleared the ground was blue and purple and yellow with hyacinths and orchids and poisonous spurge. Over the downs the swift shadows were chasing the sunlight, and a gentle caressing wind was blowing across the wide sweep of grass. By my side Gertrude was recklessly letting the reins float on the horse's back, repeating poetry in her fresh enthusiastic young voice, mispronouncing most of the long words, bounding fearlessly over others, and emphasising the lines at her own sweet will.

When we reached our destination, luncheon was already awaiting us. Gertrude sat down at the head of the table with an air of conscious majesty, and exerted herself for my benefit as an accomplished hostess. She offered me potatoes with my tart, and filled up my glass of claret with a liberal supply of port. I might, perhaps, also add that she constantly thanked herself effusively when she helped herself to any dish. For absence of mind was one of this young woman's most charming faults.

I myself, after the fashion of irresponsible people, thought her failings each more adorable than the other, but I know they nearly drove her governesses wild. Many were the stories told against her by a set of cousins who sometimes

laughed at her, but were always more or less in love with her: stories of how she was in the habit of replenishing the coffee-pot with hot water, under the mistaken impression that coffee was made on the same principle as tea; how she constantly used the word 'decomposed' when she meant discomposed; and how, finally, she began a letter to a dean by the words: 'Very dear dean,' because, as she remarked, she knew one ought to use 'very' in writing to a dean—it was, so to speak, his distinguishing title.

After luncheon Gertrude took me up into her own little sitting-room, which showed great signs of literary and artistic activity. There were Browning's poems on one little book-shelf, besides a volume or two of Carlyle, and some slim manuals in a drab-coloured binding, which, as she explained to me, were interesting books on Political Economy. There were also numerous works of art. A great deal of 'messing' went on in that room under the name of oil-painting. There were three large panels, one with a bloated lily and a bower of vivid roses in process of painting; and the other two with a neat design of fuchsias, crimson passion-flowers, and purple petunias, growing out of some very wiry grass. I need not say that the time I speak of was long before the reign of high art.

There was also a tiresome little table adorned by a wreath of primroses and violets, which, it appeared, had been considered quite finished, and had, in the first flush of success, been carried down into the drawing-room as an elegant addition to the furniture. Subsequently it was discovered that this work of art had an awkward habit of becoming sticky in hot weather, and upon one occasion had actually adhered to a lady's elbow; and this unpleasant characteristic had necessitated its retirement from public life, for a season at least.

'I think,' said Gertrude reflectively, looking at it with her head on one side, and with one finger in her mouth—'I think it might go back to the drawing-room directly the cooler weather begins; it will do very nicely for a winter table.'

On the following morning, after breakfast, Gertrude proceeded to read family prayers. She read in a loud, high-pitched voice, that rose and fell at unexpected moments, but yet was sweet despite itself. The household, chiefly composed of old servants, was well accustomed to Gertrude's peculiarities; but even some of the oldest members looked a little disturbed when she persistently pronounced Baruch 'Barouche.' Her cousins ill-naturedly asserted that she frequently used either the prayer for fine weather, or that appointed to be used in the time of war and tumults, to conclude this little morning service; but I feel myself bound to do her the justice of adding that on the present occasion she contented herself with the Collect for Christmas Day.

This was the last visit that I paid to Gertrude for some time. In the spring she and her parents went to London for the season, and I only heard vague rumours of the balls she was dancing at, and of the conquests she was making. But when she returned to the country, at the end of the summer, I found her very little changed. Perhaps she had lost some of her former sweet girlish ungainliness, but she was as fresh and simple as ever. She had certainly acquired a decided taste for flirting, and preferred flirting with ten people at once to any quieter form of that fascinating amusement. I do not think she broke many hearts; she was too honest to play with a real affection; but that winter, when she married, several young gentlemen wore an air of deep depression; and one even went so far as to lose his appetite and his sleep, and went about looking like a lost dog. She had been his first love, and in those days he thought she would be his last. There was something very piteous in the young man's despair—which was quite real at the moment—and in his forlorn belief that at one-and-twenty he had lost everything that made life worth having.

Gertrude had been married about three months when she begged me to spend a few days with her in London. She

had adopted certain dignified married airs, and gave me a great deal of advice in a tone of patronage, totally ignoring the ten years that separated my age from hers.

'If at any time, my dear,' she said, with a majestic wave of her hand—the left hand, where the broad wedding-ring was very much to the front—'if at any time I can be of use in chaperoning you anywhere, pray let me know."

And so one night we went together to a drum, my pretty Gertrude dressed in every colour of the rainbow, with diamonds sparkling in her wavy hair and shining around her soft round throat. As we alighted from our carriage, the prince and princess in whose honour the party had been given happened to arrive almost at the same moment, and we stood aside on the steps to let them pass. As usual, there was a large crowd of people waiting to see the ladies enter the house. A poor woman just behind us was vainly endeavouring to lift up her child, a little cripple, so that he might see the princess, but each time that she pressed forward a policeman pushed her back. The child broke out into a reproachful wail: 'Oh, I can't see her! I can't see her! You promised I should see her, mammy!'

Quick as lightning, Gertrude turned round. 'Give me your little boy,' she said, taking the astonished child into her arms; 'I will hold him up; he will have a much better view here.'

She waved aside the bewildered policeman with a queenly gesture. The little cripple put both his tiny wasted arms trustfully round her neck, and leant eagerly forward to see all that was to be seen; and when the sight was over, and Gertrude gently disentangled herself from his poor little hands to give him back to his mother, the child put his pale lips to her soft rosy cheek and kissed her. 'Pretty lady! pretty lady!' he said admiringly.

His mother broke out into a torrent of thanks and apologies, which Gertrude did not stay to hear, but gathered up her brilliant train and passed into the house.

I did not wonder that poor people dearly loved her. She

used to listen to all their troubles with the sympathising tears shining in her dreamy brown eyes, never doubting or questioning the truth of their stories. Her hand was always open. Several sensible people blamed her indiscriminate charity, and said that she did a great deal more harm than good. But it was a waste of words to preach to Gertrude on this matter; she gave because she could not help it.

Once a month she used to visit the large dreary workhouse in the manufacturing town near her new country home. She dressed herself carefully in her best clothes, and wore all her brightest jewels. 'For,' she said simply, 'poor people care much more to see one in one's best things than rich people do. I wonder why everybody generally puts on their common dull old clothes when they visit cottages.'

To do Gertrude justice, no one could call her commonest dress dull. Sober browns and quiet greys were unknown in her wardrobe. She wore as gay a plumage as any West Indian bird—yellow and green, pink and purple, with a vivid flash of blue or red. She would put a diamond brooch in her hat, she would fasten up the tail of her gown with some glittering shawl-pin, and would wear gold chains, like an alderman, round her throat, and a broad silver belt at her waist. It was a pretty sight, in the starved winter weather, to see her walk into the dingy wards where the garrulous old persons had drawn their chairs away from the drab-coloured walls, and were sitting round the niggardly stove, holding out their withered hands to the warmth. She seemed to bring with her a light and life which brightened up the whole room as if by magic. She had a kind word or a pretty smile for everyone, and when some inquisitive old body, with her foolishly-cunning head on one side like a magpie, would stretch out tentatively a lean arm to feel the lady's soft dress, Gertrude would put aside the deprecating mistress and would patiently wait until the whole circle had fingered the gay gown, feeling all the while as well pleased

as any child could be to see how much her fine clothes were admired.

* * * * *

I laid down the old letter with a sigh, and the pretty vision vanished from my sight. Alas! Gertrude has long ago faded out of my life, together with youth and sunshine, and many pleasant things.

'Where are the songs of spring?'

asks Keats in his 'Ode to Autumn.' Ah! the songs of spring, as we know to our cost, have all passed out of hearing, and no regrets or yearnings can ever bring them back. But yet, when I am sick or sorry, or when I lie awake at night, and dull hours hang heavy on my hands, I look back through the mists of busy years, and see once more my pretty Gertrude, dressed in all her bravery, with her kind hands outstretched to meet me, and with the sweet smile in her brown eyes.

LADY AMYOTT'S CHARGE.

THERE was a house opposite ours in London which we as children used to watch incessantly. It was not a very amusing house, either—not, for instance, like No. 16 in the same street, where there was always a poodle or a baby looking out of almost every window. Nevertheless, we used to sit for hours, eagerly watching for what we might see, and imagining all sorts of things we could not see. It was a gaunt black house in a fashionable street. There was never a tuft of mignonette, or even as much as a sooty box-bush, outside the windows; and the little lady who lived in it never came and looked out on the busy street; we could only very rarely catch a glimpse of her pale face and little erect figure. It was a very sad face—sad, as if some secret grief, some hidden sorrow, were always living with her, always supping at her table, always sitting at the head of her bed, never leaving her by night or by day.

Her story indeed was a sad one. She had been a great heiress, and had refused offer after offer. She was of a very cautious disposition, and suspected people of caring only for her money. But when she was past thirty she one day fell in love, and caution was thrown to the winds. Despite the excellent advice offered her by her friends, she insisted on marrying Lord Amyott Warden, and for a little while, a very little while, she was perfectly happy. Then came a very sad and terrible time, a time when her love tried to blind her common sense, a time when even her love failed. And then there followed the final blow, when nothing but the memory

of the old love, and the unutterable horror of a public scandal, made her consent to keep his name. So now she was living her dreary, lonely life in her large house in London, and he was in some Continental town, gambling away the liberal allowance she made him. For a time she was numbed with grief, and then as the years went on she settled down into a prim conventional life. She had a most affectionate heart, yet knew not herself how to get at it. People interested her keenly; she was longing to give them help and sympathy, but it only ended by her frightening them by her own reserve. She tried at one time visiting the sick in a hospital, and the old people in the workhouse, but when she was at either place she could not think of anything to say; and once, as she passed silently through the union wards, pressing her little ringed hands tightly together in the struggle to find some observation to make, a rude, half-witted old person remarked—

'That there wun 'ave lost her tongue.'

Which scared the poor little lady so much that she gave up going herself, though she still sent presents of fruit and game.

She was devoted to children, but had not the faintest idea how to play with them. Indeed, she never had been a child herself, but all her life long a sedate, undemonstrative little woman. And as the monotonous years drifted by, the poor lady drew still more and more into her shell, until at last her pianoforte became her only comfort and pleasure. She played with great execution and sweetness, although without much expression, for her reserve went so far as to forbid her even that vent of feeling. The notes seemed to drop like water from the clever little fingers, as they rippled over the keys. She spent hours in practising, and then, when the piece was perfect, there was no one to whom she cared to play it.

One afternoon, a few weeks before Christmas, when the early dusk was closing in on the dull London streets, a letter with an Indian stamp arrived for Lady Amyott. She

recognised the handwriting; it was the handwriting of a cousin of whom she had been very fond when they were both girls together, and who had married early and was now in India with her husband :—

'My dear Theodosia,—I am going to ask a very great favour of you. Do not hesitate to refuse if it causes you any inconvenience. I shall quite understand, dear.'

Lady Amyott read so far, and then paused in dismay. And well she might, for the letter went on to ask her, in the most affectionate terms, to undertake the care of Arthur (Mrs. Arbuthnot's youngest boy) during his Christmas holidays.

'You would find him a *very* good boy,' wrote Mrs. Arbuthnot, with that confidence which is so remarkable in mothers. 'He is, I know, apt to be untidy in his habits, and not quite as particular as he ought to be about washing, but he is everything that is dear and affectionate, and would soon love you dearly.'

And then she went on as if in duty bound to give Lady Amyott some loopholes of escape.

'I know you must have so many engagements that you must not *think* of taking him unless it quite suits you. It was only the idea of his having to pass his holidays all alone at school, now that his grandmother cannot receive him, that has made me venture to ask you.'

Lady Amyott sat down before the fire and considered. The prospect of having a wild schoolboy in her quiet orderly house appalled her. 'Not quite as particular about washing as he ought to be!' she moaned. And yet it hurt her to think of the child's loneliness, and the promise that he would 'soon love her dearly' had a great attraction for her. There had been a time when she had longed very earnestly for a child of her own, and had thought how pleasant it would be to have little arms clasped round her neck and little lips pressed lovingly to her cheek. The idea of this boy's affection pleased her; 'but then, if he were a dirty, mischievous boy?'

In the end Lady Amyott sat down at her writing-table and wrote a kind shy letter to Arthur, asking him to spend his Christmas holidays with her in London. In a few days she received an irreproachably clean and well-spelt reply, accepting her kind invitation 'with the greatest possible pleasure.' Ignorant as Lady Amyott was of human nature, she suspected, and suspected rightly, that this beautiful epistle was not Arthur's unassisted production. Meanwhile Lady Amyott amused herself by making ready for her guest a little room upstairs, filling it with everything that she imagined a boy could possibly care for.

When the day for his arrival came she drove herself to meet him at the station. He was to arrive in time for luncheon, and Lady Amyott had ordered for that meal everything that the cook told her 'young gentlemen was most partial to.' She sent the footman to meet Arthur on the platform. Mrs. Arbuthnot had given her a description of Arthur, and according to her he was a very pretty, delicate-looking boy of eleven, with a pale face and dark-red hair.

It seemed to Lady Amyott that the footman was gone a long time, and when he did return it was without any signs of Arthur. Lady Amyott was much alarmed. There were a great many young gentlemen arriving for the holidays by that train, James said, but they had all been fetched by their friends. Master Arbuthnot was not there, of this he was positive. In her perturbation Lady Amyott alighted from her carriage and went into the station. The bustle and rush of arrivals were over, and the platform was almost deserted, but at the farthest end there was a little crowd of porters. Lady Amyott, in despair, went up to ask them when she might expect the next train from Brighton. The group parted, and she saw in the midst the cause of the gathering —a little boy with dark-red hair, and a face as black as that of a negro minstrel. A dreadful presentiment that this was Arthur filled poor Lady Amyott's mind.

'Your ma won't know yer again,' a porter was saying,

and the child answered simply, 'I'm not going to spend the holidays with mother—she's in India—but I'm to go to Lady Amyott Warden, and I don't know how to find her. She said she was coming to meet me, and I blacked my face coming in the train.'

Lady Amyott, poor thing, gave a little startled cry, and the porters slouched off and left her standing in front of Arthur, who came up to her with a subdued laugh.

'My dear boy!' she said, in a tone of expostulation, 'whatever made you do such a thing, Arthur?'

'Hampton and Russell said you would enjoy it,' replied the boy, a little piteously. 'Are you angry? Oh, don't be angry!' and he advanced to kiss her, with both his grimy claws outstretched.

She shrank back with a little moan. 'Oh, you had better come straight home with me and wash your face.'

He followed her past the grinning porters and the astonished footman, and, after a polite attempt to help her into the carriage, he jumped in himself, and sat with his eyes eagerly fixed on the shops and passers-by as they drove along.

'Hullo! there's an orange shop! I'll buy you some oranges—I've got sixpence left. Oh, look at that beggar—he's quite blind! Oh, do stop the carriage and let me give him my sixpence! Oh, he's gone!'

Meanwhile Lady Amyott was brooding in melancholy upon her fate. Her worst fears were confirmed—indeed, more than confirmed—for in her moments of wildest imagination she had never dreamt of such a terribly dirty boy. 'How did you manage to black your face?' she had asked.

'Oh, I can show you how quite easily,' had been the obliging reply. 'You first lick your fingers, and then rub them on the windows, or on your boots, or anywhere, and then on your face, you know!'

She sent him up to his room with the footman, and waited for him in the dining-room. When he reappeared she

was astonished at the change. His features were refined and pretty in the extreme. Two wistful dreamy blue eyes looked out of the little white face, and the dark-red hair only served to set in strong relief the purity and delicacy of his complexion.

He put up his face to be kissed, and then flung his arm round her neck. 'You're rather like mother,' he said gently; 'and what pretty rings you have on!'

After lunch—for which Arthur showed little appetite, having refreshed himself incessantly with Banbury cakes and chocolate creams for three hours previously—Lady Amyott took him up into the drawing-room.

Directly he saw the piano he cried eagerly, 'Do you play? Please play me something!' and he pulled her to the music-stool. He hunted among a pile of music, ruthlessly turning it topsy-turvy in a minute. 'Play this sonata of Mozart's—no, the "Moonlight Sonata," I like that best—and then these airs from "Lohengrin."'

She obeyed, and the afternoon slipped away, she playing piece after piece, while the little red head pressed itself close against hers, and the sharp little chin hooked itself firmly but affectionately into her shoulder.

The next few days passed peacefully enough. Lady Amyott sent the boy out shopping with the footman, or took him herself to see morning performances, and, except for his untidy dreamy ways, enlivened by an occasional flash of mischief, there was nothing to disturb her sense of order and of the fitness of things. It is true that he brought her back horrible presents from these shopping expeditions: weird sweets, a dreadful baby in pink soap, Diprose's 'Jest Book,' and some extremely gaudy pieces of false jewellery.

'Look here, dear,' he said (he always called her 'dear'), 'isn't this lovely? Won't it look nice on your best black velvet! James helped me to choose it, and he bought one just like it; and I believe (only you mustn't tell, dear,

because it's a secret) that James is going to give it to the scullery-maid on her birthday, which is next Tuesday.'

One evening it chanced that Lady Amyott was going to dine with some friends, and consequently Arthur would be left quite alone.

'I'll be quite good,' he had said, 'if you will only let me choose what dress you are to wear and what jewels; and I shan't the least bit mind being alone if the kitchen cat may come up and sit with me.'

Lady Amyott consented, as indeed she did to everything Arthur asked, and the boy came up to her room, where all her dresses were spread out upon the bed for his inspection.

'I wish you had got an orange dress,' he said regretfully, 'like old Mrs. Snipe at our school.' His black fingers were straying all the while over a white silk. 'I think the blue one will do best; only you must wear lots of flowers and jewels.' And he went to the dressing-case and pulled out handfuls of ornaments, 'Here, these diamonds, and that ruby necklace, and those funny green stones; and then all those bracelets, and these big blue pins. I want you to look very grand.'

And Lady Amyott, who could not find it in her heart to refuse him anything, submitted to his choice, with certain modifications, and went out to her dinner-party dressed more like a Begum than a quiet retiring little lady. But she scarcely minded that. It was so long since anyone had cared how she was dressed, or what ornaments she put on.

That night, when she returned, she went up gently to Arthur's room and opened the door. He was asleep in his little white lair, and the kitchen cat, who had gone to bed with him, was purring on his pillow. Lady Amyott softly removed the cat and then bent down and kissed him. He turned in his sleep, and muttered, 'Dear, you are so like mother, dear'; and the poor forlorn little lady's eyes filled with tears; but they were, I think, tears of pleasure, for it seemed to her, as she stood by the child's bedside, that there

might still be something for her which would make life worth living; that the boy's affection had thawed the snows which had lain so long on her heart, and that, in the new warmth and sunshine, her poor numbed heart itself might recover greenness, and awake, after so long and drear a winter, to a spring of bright and hopeful days.

MR. BURD'S ROMANCE

It was a beautiful evening in June. There was a sense of summer in all its first sweetness and freshness pervading the air even in the dusty streets of the little country town where Mr. Albert Burd spent his life. He was now sauntering home from his dingy, stuffy office, where he had passed the livelong summer day on a high stool in front of a ledger. 'Home' to him consisted of two poky rooms in a back street; but his sitting-room had this advantage—that it looked upon green woods and blooming hedges, and fields yellow with buttercups. Mr. Burd's tea was awaiting him; a cheerless tea, brewing feebly in an old plated tea-pot, which, owing to its loss of one leg, drooped wearily to one side. The bread looked stale and uninviting, and the butter pale and pasty. Nor was the room itself attractive. There was a hard horse-hair sofa veiled in crochet antimacassars. A print, called the 'Poacher's Revenge,' representing an extremely harrowing scene, hung over the chimney-piece. The empty fireplace was filled by a brilliant erection of magenta and green paper. There were two cracked vases and a china dog on the mantelpiece, and there was on the sideboard an ornament with tiers of cut-glass pendants, which Mr. Burd, on the authority of his landlady, had always believed to be of priceless value.

Mr. Burd leant back in his arm-chair, and looked out on the quiet country. There was a vague scent of bean-fields and of wild flowers in the soft, die-away wind that floated in at the open window; and there was still a faint

suggestion of pink and gold in the western sky. Albert could hear the lowing of the cattle in the little farmyard beyond the meadows, and the contented quacking of the ducks on the pond. All these pleasant sights and sounds soothed his tired head, and he began to day-dream over again the one romance of his life. Mr. Burd was not a romantic person in appearance. He was short and square, with an honest, solemn face, rather like some black-and-tan dogs that I know; and he wore his dull-coloured hair plastered down on his forehead in the most unbecoming manner. He had always been hardworking, honest, and frugal, one of those people who practise simply and quietly all the homely, everyday virtues, and are considered by their neighbours to be worthy and respectable in the highest degree. And yet, despite these uncompromising and certainly commonplace circumstances, he had ideals and fancies of his own (he would rather have died than have revealed them to any human being), which gave a tinge of romantic colouring to his life.

Some years before, on a bitter December evening, Mr. Burd had been sent by his employer with some important papers to Thelwick Castle, a drive of about fourteen miles. The wind was as keen as a carving-knife, and pierced poor Albert's greatcoat and woollen comforter. The chilly darkness had closed in over the ice-bound country. Snow-clouds were gathering and occasional flakes were falling, driven swiftly by the fierce and hungry wind that was howling like a wolf round the woods and solitary houses. Sometimes Mr. Burd drove through villages where lights and the cheerful blaze of a fire could be seen through the windows. He shivered, and envied the cottagers; and he thought how pleasant it must be, after a hard day's work, to sit round the warm hearth, with wife and children beside you.

All things must come to an end, however long they seem, and accordingly Mr. Burd reached Thelwick Castle. He rang the bell with trembling and frozen fingers, and presently the heavy hall-door was opened by a footman in a

magnificent livery, and Albert was admitted, blinking like a bat, into the great bright hall. He felt a confused sense of dazzling light, of delicious warmth, and of the scent of hothouse flowers with which the room was filled—delicate azaleas, Roman hyacinths, strange tall lilies, and sweet white lilac. It seemed to him, coming out of the rough wind and frozen country, like an enchanted palace. He took off his greatcoat and waited—how long he did not know, perhaps five minutes—until the footman, who had gone to announce the clerk's arrival, returned with a message that simply terrified Mr. Burd.

'The family are at dinner, and her ladyship begs you will come into the dining-room, and dine with them.'

Albert stammered out an excuse. The bare idea of it frightened him, and at all costs he resolved to decline such an alarming honour. Oh, why had he not gone round to the back door? he thought, bitterly repenting his mistake; and then he would have been safe, and at his ease in the steward's room.

'I would rather wait until his lordship has dined, and then I can give him the papers,' he said.

He waited in a tremor of expectation while the footman took back his answer. Presently a young man of about his own age, tall, handsome, and with a kindly, good-humoured face, pushed aside the tapestry curtains through which the footman had passed, and came up to Albert. He shook hands with him, and said pleasantly—

'My mother won't hear of your having no dinner. We are shocked to think of the cold drive you must have had from Tinbury. You had really much better come in and have something.'

Poor Albert looked and felt most unhappy, and said he was not in trim to appear at the dinner-table.

The young man repressed a smile. 'Oh, nonsense,' he said; 'we are alone, and you had much better come. My mother expects you.'

And before Mr. Burd knew what he was doing, he

found himself following his new acquaintance into a large room, where he could see dimly a haze of lights, a shimmer of gold and silver plate, and a vista of faces down a long dinner-table. He had a confused idea that Lady Hurst was expressing kindly her regrets for his cold drive ; and then, as if in a dream, he heard her tell her son to make room for Mr. Burd between himself and a beautiful young lady—the most lovely young lady that Albert had ever seen—whose name seemed to be Blanche.

As Mr. Burd thought over the whole scene that summer evening, years after, it seemed to him that he could never forget a single detail of her dress, or a single feature of her face. He remembered that she was tall, and wore her bright hair in soft coils round her head. Her eyes were large and grey, and had a very sweet happy look in them. She was very queenly and stately, and yet so kind and gracious. And he could, even after the lapse of these long years, recall everything she had said to him—three little sentences : 'Are you not very cold ?'—'Is it snowing ?'—'Did you drive all the way from Tinbury !' And then seeing that her attempts at conversation only served to bewilder Mr. Burd, she was silent.

But he always felt assured that she must be very clever and witty, and he often used to try to fancy the things she might have said if he had not been so stupid and shy.

The young man on his right hand was doing his best to make him feel at home, endeavouring to set him at his ease, and pressing him to eat and drink. Meanwhile Albert carefully copied his neighbours' manners, fearful lest he might sin against some unknown law of etiquette if he followed his own impulses. It is my impression that if at the time he felt ill at ease he always afterwards looked upon this evening as the summit of his existence.

The time passed like a dream ; the papers were signed, Lord and Lady Hurst bade him good-bye, and, oh rapture ! Blanche smiled graciously as he left. He never saw her again ; he never knew who she was, or what might be her

surname, but she always remained in his fancy as the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. And as he leant back in his arm-chair by the open window that summer evening, he began to wonder what she might be doing at that moment. She never grew any older in his mind, and he fancied she must be going to some grand London ball. He pictured her dressed in some soft blue kind of gauze—the shimmering blue of water in the sunlight—and wearing white lilies at her breast and in her hair. He imagined her amidst scenes, formed partly from recollections of the 'Arabian Nights' and partly from what he remembered of Thelwick Castle, dazzling with light and brilliant with flowers; a crowd of beautiful ladies, and one stepping in amongst them, the queen of them all. Then he fancied music and dancing, and admiring cavaliers crowding round her, and begging for the favour of her hand in the dance, at least so they worded it in Mr. Burd's fancy. But she was refusing them all, in her majestic but courteous way. 'I am already engaged,' he supposed her to be saying, 'I must decline.' And then, oh wonder! oh rapture!—Mr. Burd trembled as he imagined this part—he, Albert Burd, came forward, and she, this Queen Blanche, went to meet him and laid her hand on his arm, and she said, in her clear, kind voice, 'I have been waiting for you, Mr. Burd.'

And then, like most dreams, having reached a climax, this day-dream faded away, and a large cockchafer lumbered heavily in at the window and dropped into the milk-jug, whence Mr. Burd had to extract it carefully with a spoon. He set the dripping thing tenderly on the window-sill, and watched it shake its wet wings and then sail off into the dim sweet twilight beyond, which was as vague and unknown as the twilight of dreams and fancies where he himself had been wandering so happily.

A FELLOW-PASSENGER

THE first time that I met Mr. Algernon Read was on board a large steamer homeward bound. I was sitting with my two little sisters on deck, watching the cool awnings flapping in the soft warm wind. The sea was violet and green, with far-away flakes of foam; there was neither land nor yet a sail to be seen, nor a sound to be heard, save the measured creaking of the ship as she cleft her way through the rounded hollows and over the curled ridges of the iridescent water.

My youngest sister, a child of ten, who had only lately recovered from low fever, complained of feeling tired and faint, and asked me to carry her down to her cabin. I took her up in my arms and tried to make my way to the 'stairs,' as we ignorantly called the 'companion'; but the ship was rolling, and I found it difficult to keep from falling. Presently a gentleman came up to me with a courteous bow, and before I could gainsay him he had taken Felicia gently out of my arms and had carried her to her cabin. But my heart smote me for letting him do it. He was about two-and-twenty, very small, with a delicate refined face, and a bright hectic flush on each cheek. His hands were like those of a girl, and had that transparent look, like egg-shell china, which is so common in consumption. His hair was almost white, it was of so pale a flaxen; the eyes were large and dreamy, and had dark lines round them; but there was something very frank and simple in the face—something fresh and innocent, like a child. He did not give

me time to thank him, but when, a few hours later, I chanced to see him on deck, I went up to him and expressed my gratitude.

He smiled. 'I saw that you couldn't carry her,' he said triumphantly, 'and I was only too glad to be of service. What is the good of being a man, and stronger than most people, if one makes no use of one's strength.'

This assumption of strength startled me so much that I was silent.

'There are some porpoises to be seen,' he said, after a pause, 'if you care to come to the side of the ship.'

We went and watched the strange black things leaping gaily through the water, and we gradually fell into conversation. I learnt that Mr. Algernon lived with his mother in the suburbs of London, that he was her sole surviving son, and that he was at present returning to her from a long sea voyage which he had undertaken for his health.

'Not that there is much the matter with me,' he said, coughing all the while, 'but I fancy I went in too much for athletics at Oxford.'

There is no place in the world so favourable for making friends as on board a ship. The idleness and monotony of the life makes people communicative and confidential. It is difficult to read much, although it would be hard to say why; it is impossible to sleep more than twelve hours out of the twenty-four; and one slow restful day is exactly like another. I used to sit in the shade, with my needlework, whilst the sick child lay on a rug beside me. Mr. Algernon was certain to join us, with a pile of books, and a block for sketching. There is, I think, no friendship pleasanter than that which can exist between a very young man and a woman some eight or ten years older, and Mr. Algernon and I thoroughly enjoyed this intercourse. He showed me his sketches and read me poetry aloud, with a great deal of roll and swell in his voice, and with a certain amount of gesticulation. He loved heroic pieces—Macaulay's 'Lays of Ancient Rome,' Aytoun's 'Scottish Cavaliers,' and the old

north-country ballads. His thin wan face would light up with enthusiasm, and he used literally to tremble with the excitement and passion of the poems. He was curiously free from the usual boyish dread of ridicule, and took life very simply and earnestly. The world to him was a great arena, in which noble deeds might be done. He himself was a knight-errant, bound by all he held sacred to uphold the right and to protect the weak, for he always had the touching belief in his physical strength, and could not see, what was so terribly plain to everyone else, that he was slowly dying of decline. His opinions on every subject were decided, tolerance was unknown to him. And indeed, from his point of view, every matter was simple; there were two sides to each question—a right one and a wrong—for he admitted of no shades. Black was very black to him, and white very pure and dazzling. There were no such things in his philosophy as intermediate shades of grey or drab.

One of his favourite topics was the mischief that he declared was done by the clamour for (so-called) Women's Rights. 'It is a physical impossibility,' he used to say, drawing himself up majestically to his full height of five feet five inches, 'that women can be as strong as men!' And then fiercely, 'Cannot they see that they are trying to do away with all the chivalry, all the most beautiful and gentle side of life? Surely every gentleman ought to feel it his *splendid* duty to protect and help the weak, and to render service to any woman in distress! How can I reverence and admire a brickbat of a woman who elbows and pushes with the crowd! How can I wish to make place for her and help her on her way? No!'—this was said sternly—'terrible as it is to think of, the crowd, stronger than she is, will pass over her and crush her!'

I sat meekly by, assenting. It was a lovely breezy afternoon, and yet so warm as to be a dreamy, soothing time. There was a sense of idleness approaching to sleepiness pervading the whole ship; the soft motion of the vessel

was only like the rocking of a cradle, enough to lull one to rest.

Mr. Algernon had seated himself by my side, and was turning over his sketch-book.

Suddenly he stopped. 'Do you—do you—admire that face?' he said, a little tremulously, and passed me his book.

Now dear Mr. Algernon's drawing was theoretic rather than practical. He believed in it thoroughly himself, and spent many hours upon it. I am no judge of art, but I can only say humbly, but truthfully, that none of his pictures ever resembled anything I had ever seen or imagined. The water-colour in question represented a young lady with an abundance of black hair and a very uncertain line of feature. I like to be honest when I can, so I said, warmly, 'What a quantity of hair!'

'Ah! she is far more beautiful than you could imagine from this horrid sketch.'

And then, bit by bit, I gathered that the young lady was a Miss Laura Roland, with whom he was desperately in love, and that she had promised to engage herself definitely to him when he returned from this sea voyage.

'She has—she has,' he said, with a painful effort, 'a great shrinking from illness, and feared, from some foolish expression of the doctor's, that I was not as well as I seemed. But I shall return so strong that this objection, at any rate, will be overcome.'

He went on in broken, incoherent sentences to describe how beautiful and clever and 'splendid' she was, and how happy he should be to devote his life to trying to make himself worthy of her.

The pleasant idle days floated by, and we steamed hour by hour out of the warm violet seas into the grey-green northern waters. Mr. Algernon had many talks with me about his future. 'I needn't work for my living,' he had explained, 'so there will be all my life to work for other people'; and then he unfolded to me his plans for reading-rooms in the East End of London, for a cottage hospital, and

a ragged school. '*She* will help me in all this,' he said, with a quick blush, and a bright look in his eyes.

I was going to land at Plymouth, and Mr. Algernon was anxious to do everything for my comfort. 'If by any mistake your brother doesn't come to meet you, you must let me manage everything for you. A lady finds these things difficult alone. She needs someone with a strong authoritative voice to order about the cabmen and porters.'

My brother, however, came on board, and at the same time some benevolent person brought all the passengers their letters. I was standing on deck by a heap of luggage, when I heard a low voice at my shoulder. 'May I speak to you?' I turned round, and saw Mr. Algernon, but how strangely altered! He was very pale, and was trembling with suppressed excitement. I walked a few paces with him, and then he said quietly, 'Miss Roland is married; she has written to tell me. I hope she—she will be happy.' And then with a break in his voice, 'That is all.'

His look of utter misery haunts me now when I think of the boyish face, worn as it was by illness. I said the first words of sympathy that came into my head.

'You must never blame her,' he rejoined quickly. 'She was right to do what made her happy. I wished for nothing but her happiness—only—only——' and he left the sentence unfinished. I had but time to bid him good-bye, and beg him to come and see me in London, which he promised to do.

A month passed, and I heard nothing of Mr. Algernon, until one morning a letter came from his mother, begging me to spend an afternoon with them. 'My son is very ill,' she wrote; 'I do not like to think how ill; but he is very anxious to see you, and we should both think it very kind of you if you will visit us.'

I went that very day. Mr. Algernon's home was an old-fashioned red-brick house with a smooth lawn, sheltered by high yew hedges, that sloped down to the river. There was a field at the back, where—it was June—they were making

hay. The garden and the walls of the house were sweet with roses—old-fashioned cabbage roses, single roses that show their yellow hearts, clustering banksias, trailing pink roses, tea roses with their dark leaves, and moss roses with their gummy scent. There were a broad cedar and a twisted mulberry-tree on the lawn, and in the shade of these trees, on a couch, lay the poor dear boy, looking up at the deep-blue sky that showed between the dark branches of the cedar. His mother, who was with me, called to him gently. He started, and put out his wasted hand, with a charming smile. His face was greatly changed. It had that bright, transfigured look which so often belongs to the last stages of decline.

'It is very kind of you to come and see me,' he said. 'Please sit down, and let us talk.'

His mother left us, and we fell into one of our old discussions on books. Then there came a pause. I could see he had something to say, but did not know how to begin. At last he broke the silence. 'I have so often told you of all the work I meant to do in the world, and now they say I shall never do it. Perhaps it is as well. I am content to leave it.' He leant back wearily and covered his face with his hands. I fancied I could see a tear trickling through the thin fingers. 'I had thought,' he went on, with a pathos which went to my heart, 'what a splendid life it would have been—if—if she had wished it—to work together. But the only way now to do God's work is to—to——' He faltered, and then, clasping his hands, and with a strange, sweet look in his eyes, whispered the words which have comforted so many in their helplessness, 'They also serve who only stand and wait.'

Then after a little he added simply 'I am not afraid of death, you know. It is after all only the way out of one life into another.'

To-day, when I read in the *Times* the announcement of his death, the blinding tears filled my eyes as I thought of the 'work' that was left undone, and the noble projects

that never would be carried out. But after all they were foolish tears. Was it not better for him to leave life whilst his love for it and belief in it were still so strong, and before he had learnt more of such things as weariness and disappointment ?

ROSE DORMER

It was a gay October morning. There were still long swathes of mist in the valley, but the sunshine was warm and bright on the Manor House terrace, where Mr. Erasmus Scott was pacing up and down with an open book in his hand. The frost had not yet bitten the dahlias or the heliotrope, and the warm touches of sunlight were drawing out the penetrating scent of the mignonette which filled every nook and crevice in the beds and borders. From the lawn you could look away into a very soft blue distance, where beech woods and a gentle line of hills seemed to melt into the sky.

Mr. Erasmus Scott was a little man, with thin grey hair, a pink-and-white complexion, and a meek and kindly face, which always wore a puzzled expression. He was about forty-seven, but seemed older. He had lived until of late in a little world of his own, with books for his only companions and friends—for he had found people difficult to understand and hard to please. He had been an unsuccessful man; he had loved a beautiful woman in the old days, and she would not even look at him. He had written a learned book, and no one had read it. His nature was too gentle to be soured, but he had said sadly, 'I shall never do anything well,' and he had left the world and gone back to his quaint old Manor House, and to his dull, solitary life. His servants loved him, and treated him like a child. He was humbly content with everything, and admired with all his heart his nephew, Dick Scott, a fine broad-shouldered young fellow of twenty-two, who

was now away shooting in Scotland. Dick was a hard rider, a skilful fisherman, and a good shot. There was a handsome good-humour in his face which won your heart at once. No one could hear his cheery voice shouting and singing, and calling to his dogs, without catching something of his light-heartedness. He had hitherto been the one and only human interest in Mr. Scott's life, but lately there had come a new element into the narrow world of the Manor House.

This was in the shape of a little cousin of Mr. Scott, Rose Dormer, who had come with her widowed mother to live in a cottage near the Manor House.

Rose was eighteen, and as sweet and bright as a pretty, wayward girl can be. Beautiful she was not in the strict sense of the word, but she had all the charm of youth, and health, and gay spirits. She soon became a queen at the Manor House. Dick and she were always quarrelling, but with Erasmus she was on excellent terms. She came to see him nearly every day on some errand of her mother's or on some device of her own. She picked his flowers, ate his fruit, and vainly turned over his books in the hopes of finding pictures. For she was very much of the same opinion as Alice in Wonderland—that a book without conversations and illustrations is a very poor invention. And so the summer and early autumn had slipped away, and one day Mr. Scott had realised to himself with a start what a change Rose's coming had made in his life. Then he tried to shake off the idea, and he opened his books and began to read, but in between the lines, over and over again he read nothing but Rose's name, until he closed the books in despair, and stood with his eyes vaguely looking across the quiet fields into space, dreaming of a sweet fresh face with innocent childish eyes ; of a willowy figure and dancing feet ; of a voice that was as gay and careless as that of a bird ; of a simple affectionate nature and winning ways—of Rose Dormer, in short. He pictured her standing in the oriel window, framed by the grey stone and the heart-shaped ivy-leaves, dressed in some soft brown stuff with a knot of

pale pink ribbons on her dress and her hands full of carnations and mignonette ;. or sitting at the head of the old-fashioned oak table pouring out tea, with the gravity and dignity of an accomplished housekeeper.

Such thoughts as these were occupying Erasmus Scott as he paced up and down the terrace. And as so often happens, the very person he was thinking of came tripping by herself to interrupt his meditations. A large green cooking-apple was thrust under his eyes.

'May I have this to eat—oh, may I ?'

'It is really too unwholesome,' began Mr. Scott timidly, and a little sadly—he could not bear to refuse her anything.

'Nothing ever makes me ill,' was the reassuring reply.

'*Must* you eat it ?' asked the poor man hesitatingly. 'Won't anything riper do as well ?'

He was so comic in his earnestness that the spoilt child burst out laughing. Then with a pretty smile—

'If you don't want me to I won't.'

He stood looking at her with his most puzzled expression, until she blushed and said peremptorily—

'Show me some books !'

So they went into the sunny library, and Rose climbed up the library steps and sat with a big book on her knees listening to his explanations of it. She had grown suddenly quiet and absent. He was afraid he had wearied her.

'I tire you, perhaps ?' he said ; 'you cannot understand how I care to live in this library with all these dusty books—such a life wouldn't suit your tastes.'

'I think one could be very happy here,' she answered softly.

He dared not look at her, the room seemed to swim before his eyes. Was it possible this sunbeam ever could be content to brighten up so dull and drab-coloured a life as his ? Presently she slipped off her perch.

'I mustn't stay longer now. Please give me the newspaper for mamma. And may I come on Saturday to tea ? You must have a cake made expressly for me !'

'You shall have anything you like,' he said, with a little husky cough that was habitual to him. Then he opened his mouth to speak—and shut it again. By this time she was gone.

Ah, well! on Saturday he would say something. What? And then he fell to composing his own speech, and her answers—but he scarcely ventured to think what those might be.

So the day slipped quietly away, and he was sitting idly by the hissing wood fire, when the door was flung open, and, to his surprise, Dick walked in.

'Why, my dear boy, where did you come from? I thought you were shooting in the north for the next three weeks to come.'

'I changed my mind, uncle. I may stay here, mayn't I?'

The permission was readily given. But as the evening drew on it became apparent even to Erasmus, who was far from clear-sighted, that something was amiss. And when after dinner Dick came to the study, drew his chair close to the fire, and sat silently gazing into the flames, his uncle at last ventured on a remark.

'Nothing wrong, my dear boy?'

'Nothing, except that I've been playing the fool,' was the encouraging reply.

Then there followed a long pause, broken at last by Mr. Scott in his slow, timid voice, 'You were saying, Dick, that you had been—eh?'

'Well, it comes to this—I'm in love! There's no good trying to fight it down. I thought I'd see if going north for a change would set me up. But it only made it worse. I never cared for a girl before, and thought it all such rot; but now I can't live without her. Oh! you can't think what it was, up in that dreary shooting-lodge on those great moors alone, with nothing but the dogs to talk to, and all day long her face and her ways haunting me!'

'She?' began Erasmus again, inquiringly. 'She is—what did you say is the name of the young lady?'

But Dick went rambling on after the fashion of people suffering from his malady. 'I think she likes me. I never thought about anything at first but mere fun and chaff, you know; and then it came over me all of a sudden that there is no one half—half like her, you know. And when I said good-bye to her I was wretched, and she looked awfully down in the mouth too. So I think she likes me. She didn't say anything—well, I suppose girls don't; they expect one to begin.'

To this general observation Mr. Scott assented, and then, in his shy, blundering way, 'You were saying the young lady's name is——? Did you meet her in Scotland?'

'In Scotland! Why, who do you think I meant—Rose Dormer, of course?'

If Dick could have seen his uncle's face he would have guessed the whole story. But, as it happened, he could not, and Erasmus broke the silence by asking very gently, 'You think she cares for you, my dear boy?'

'Well, I'm nearly sure of it. We were always quarrelling—but then that's the way with lovers, they say'; and then he went on to give strong proofs of his assertions.

Mr. Scott listened very patiently, but it seemed to him he had never known before what pain was like. He fancied he suffered more in that one half-hour than he had ever done in his whole life. Each word seemed to scorch and burn his very heart.

Then, when Dick had done, he said, 'God bless you, my dear boy! She is the sweetest girl that ever lived, and I know you will do your best to make her happy. Ah me! two young people together.'

'Dear old fellow!' thought Dick. 'It reminds him of the time when he was young.'

The next morning Dick dressed himself with care, and put a white rosebud in his button-hole and strode off to the cottage. Erasmus watched him from the window, and thought how natural it was that Rose should prefer Dick to him, and what a foolish thing it was ever to have thought

matters could be different. Yet even these reflections did not cure his heartache.

Dick returned late in the evening, beaming, and burdened by the necessity of pouring out all his story to someone—it did not matter to whom. But his uncle, although very silent (he said he was not well—'toothache'), made a good listener, and this was all Dick wanted.

When the engagement was announced in the neighbourhood everyone said how 'suitable it was, and how nice for Mr. Scott to have a niece he was so fond of! Only, poor man, he seemed to have been suffering so much from toothache lately. Of course, he was delighted about the marriage, but he really looked miserably ill. It would be far better to have every tooth out than to suffer in this way!'

One cold December evening, when Dick and Rose were sitting by the fire in the twilight, Mr. Scott, against his will, overheard a scrap of their conversation. He was arranging books in a corner, and they had quite forgotten his presence.

'How strange it is,' Dick was saying meditatively, 'that some people seem so content to be without happiness like ours! Look at my uncle. The dear old boy never seems to want anything more than his books.'

'Do you know, Dick,' answered Rose, very gently, 'I think he would have very much liked things in this life to have been different. Not that he ever said anything to me. But it is a fancy of mine.'

Could it be that Rose had understood dimly something of the pain he had suffered, something of the sacrifice he had made? He liked to think so; there was a vague comfort in the thought that she knew that his own happiness was as nothing to him in comparison with hers.

AN OLD MAID'S STORY

I WAS spending a winter on the Riviera, amid sunshine, bitter winds, flowers, dust, and flies. It was a lazy, desultory life, despite all my efforts. Fine days spent in the grey olive-yards, or on the warm rosemary-clad slopes of the hills; chilly windy days passed in stuffy hotel-rooms, in company with people as idle and as ill as myself. One day I was sitting in the hotel garden, which was sweet with heliotrope—cherry-pie we used to call it in the little flower-garden at home—white stocks, and fragrant-leaved geraniums. From my sheltered nook I could see a great stretch of cobalt sea, a distant pearly headland, delicate and diaphanous as a dream, and a foreground of brown rocks and rough aloes. I was day-dreaming, thinking of England, with a touch of home-sickness, recalling narrow lanes, fringed with primroses and faint white violets; brown beech hedges that keep their russet leaves until the tender young ones push them off; green meadows dotted with daffodils; cool grey mornings and chequered skies. My rest was disturbed by the unwelcome voices of the two hotel gossips—a middle-aged man with an unctuous manner and drawling voice, and a fat old lady with a white face that was covered at intervals by freckles, and with parti-coloured hair, greyish, with green lights in it, presumably not natural. She always spoke in the subdued tones which most people use in a sick-room.

'You don't say so!' she was saying, in her fat, husky whisper.

'Yes, Mrs. Mackay,' her companion answered. 'I

assure you Villa Chiara has been taken by Sir Eustace Bemerton. He is there now. They say he can't last more than a few weeks. When you come to consider the life he has led——'

'Ah? I know nothing of it,' said Mrs. Mackay, scenting the carrion from afar. 'He was very wild, you were saying?'

Mr. Brudel's voice dropped lower, but I caught his concluding words—'and now he's all alone, dying, Mrs. Mackay, dying in a foreign land, without a friend or relation near him.'

'You don't say so! Poor creature!' moaned Mrs. Mackay, with that sort of satisfaction that a shocking story produces in some people. 'A kind of judgment for his evil life.'

But I had heard enough, and more than enough, to disturb my peace, and I slowly returned to the hotel. Sir Eustace Bemerton was my mother's cousin. He had been the disgrace of his family. He had not only gambled away his own fortune, but he had ruined everyone—friends, dependents, servants—who would trust him. His honour was tarnished. Men blackballed him at clubs, and most houses were closed to him; and now, at fifty-five, he was dying alone, poor and forsaken, far from home. It was clearly my duty to go to him and offer what help I could.

Villa Chiara was a little deserted house, standing low down amidst a tangle of orange and lemon trees, and with grey olive woods stretching away behind it. The broken gate was propped up with a stone. The pathway to the house lay through peasants' gardens, little plantations of orange trees and Japanese medlars, beneath which were patches of sweet grey Parma violets and double scarlet anemones. A peasant girl, with a blue handkerchief tied over her brown head, was digging in a waste plot of ground, where there was a thicket of red roses, a row of peas, and a background of tall picturesque weeds. The air was heavy with the scent of the flowering pittosporums, and drowsy with the

chirping of the cicadas. Behind the house, and to the left and right, stretched the gnarled branches and massive trunks of the grey-green olive woods. The door was open, and I could hear a low querulous voice.

'These wretched Italians never can do a thing properly,' and a tall, thin figure tottered out into the porch. He was terribly emaciated. The eyes were sunken, encircled with black lines, and shining with a peculiar brilliancy. He was so thin that his clothes, which were in the height of fashion, hung on him like rags on a scarecrow. Directly he saw me a change passed over his face. He took off his hat with a ghastly attempt at gallantry and with a smile that was meant to be killing upon his lips.

'I don't think you know me,' I began, with a shudder of pity; 'I am a cousin of yours'; and I proceeded to explain.

'Ah, quite so, quite so!' he answered. 'Very kind of you to come and call upon me. I had no idea I had any relations so near me, or I should have done myself the pleasure of calling. I am temporarily obliged,' he continued, with a wave of his hand and an emphasis on 'temporarily,' 'to pass a few weeks in a warmer climate—a great deprivation, my dear cousin, to a hunting man; I miss the exercise in a way that ladies'—he tottered to a bench as he spoke—'can hardly comprehend. Won't you sit down here? My villa is a mere peasant's hut—the only house that could be procured so late in the season.' He was interrupted by a fit of coughing that shook his whole frame. 'A chill that I caught shooting last autumn,' he said, by way of explanation, 'and that I cannot get rid of. I've no confidence in the doctors now. In the old days they used to give one some mixture or other, and a mustard plaster, and one was all right again in a day or two; but they have lost the knack of that now.'

He talked on about the weather, the beauty of the Riviera, and the last bit of gossip, while I listened. It seemed to me like a skeleton trying to be coquettish; there

was something indescribably ghastly in the efforts of this dying man to appear unconscious of his position. He knew and I knew the comedy we were playing. It made my heart ache.

'Ah, what? going already, my dear cousin?' he said, as I rose. 'Come again, come again; I appreciate ladies' visits, I assure you. Miss Mildmay is good enough at times to cheer my solitude. I fancy I see her now, coming through the trees—an excellent person, not beautiful, as we all know, but a good soul, a good soul!'

I turned, and saw a lady who might have been about forty-five advancing towards us. She was very plain: a long nose and high cheek-bones, a sallow complexion, and a large, ungraceful mouth. The eyes were the redeeming feature. They were large and blue, not specially beautiful in shape, but very pleasing in colour and expression—kind eyes, through which you instinctively felt an honest, affectionate soul must look. There was something tremulously eager in her face as she came to meet us. I knew by intuition that she must have loved that poor man; perhaps—for who can say how enduring love is?—she loved him still. She blushed as she took his hand and asked him how he felt. She had a little basket in her hand, which she took into the house; it contained some little delicacies for the invalid. When she came out again she had regained her composure. I had found it difficult to talk to Sir Eustace, but I admired the bright, cheerful manner in which she interested him and talked his talk.

As we walked home together that evening I learnt that Miss Mildmay had met Sir Eustace many years ago, that she had entirely lost sight of him, and had come across him again here.

Every other day she and I went to Villa Chiara together. Miss Mildmay tried repeatedly to speak to him on religious matters (I confess I had not the courage to attempt it), but he always evaded the subject. Anything that could have the most distant allusion to death seemed to fill him with

superstitious terror. But one day—it was then very near the end—when Miss Mildmay went alone to him, she returned in a more hopeful frame of mind. He had, she said, asked her to read the Psalms for the day to him, and his parting words had been to beg her to come and read to him again. He died on the following day.

That evening Miss Mildmay and I went out in the soft moonlight and wandered through the dim woods. Overhead the wide sky was lit with opalesque rays that touched the grey olives with silver. The air was full of a vague penetrating fragrance. Far away were the sounds of the frogs croaking round the tanks in distant gardens, and the rhythmic beat of the tideless sea on the dark rocks. As I listened to my companion the whole story of a life rose before me. I seemed to see the white house with pillars, the broad green lawn, a 'bird-haunted lawn,' edged by lilacs and laburnums, and guelder roses that shed their snowy flowers when you gathered them; the pleasant fields dotted with elms, sloping down to the rapid little river that sang to itself as it flowed through broad pastures, fringed with yellow flags and ragged-robin and forget-me-nots. There Josephine Mildmay grew up, together with Tom (who was in the army), Ned (the clergyman), Cissy (the pretty one), and poor Charlotte, who died. Josephine was the eldest of the family. She 'came out' at the Breckenford Hunt Ball, in white tarletan and sandal shoes, and with a wreath of pink roses on her head; and she danced every dance. In those days each partner seemed to her more charming than the last. The Manor House was always full of merry young voices, and laughter and quick footsteps, and the days were all too short. Then the next spring there was a new clergyman at Willingden, a silent, rather heavy fellow, but honest and kindly, and anxious to do his duty in his parish. He meant to marry; the red-brick parsonage covered with ivy and monthly roses was incomplete without a mistress; and he admired Miss Josephine's brightness and good-temper. She was pleased with him too; and so matters dawdled on.

There was plenty of time. Then came the cricketing season, which was always a gay time. Miss Josephine, in white muslin and alternately a blue or a pink sash, went in the family carriage with her mother, a good-natured sleepy old lady, to all the matches near. One lovely day in August, when the corn was still uncut and making golden shimmers whenever the wind rustled through the ripe ears, Josephine, in her best gown, and wearing a nosegay of lemon verbena and jasmin, went to the great cricket match at Braden Park. It was the most important match of the season. Lord and Lady Braden entertained all the country side. There was usually, too, a large party staying in the house—fine gentlemen and superfine ladies, who displayed the latest fashions and gave themselves foolish airs with the quiet country neighbours. Josephine felt a little bewildered as she followed her father and mother through the well-dressed crowd. Presently they passed a lady and gentleman standing apart from the rest, beneath a spreading beech. The lady was very pretty, with delicate high-bred features, a fair complexion, and bright brown eyes like those of a hawk. There was something haughty, almost malevolent, in her face, although it was so pretty. Suddenly Josephine caught her foot in a hole in the turf, and down she went, to her dismay. She was not hurt, but much ashamed of herself, and as the gentleman came forward to help her up, the tears, which were always ready enough with her, rose to her eyes. He saw it, and with kindly tact tried to cover her discomfiture. He introduced himself to Mrs. Mildmay—Sir Eustace Bemerton, staying at Lord Braden's. Presently he was deep in conversation with Josephine, and the lady under the beech having glanced scornfully at the simple country girl, gathered her cachemire shawl round her, turned her back upon them, and rejoined the rest of her party.

That afternoon seemed to Josephine the pleasantest that she had ever spent. Sir Eustace, partly because he wanted to pique Mrs. Fairfax (the lady with the hawk's eyes) and

partly because he really liked Josephine's frank and simple ways, spent all the afternoon with her. They wandered together through the conservatories and grape-houses, and over the velvet lawns, and under the massive cedars, until the purple shadows slipped down over the grassy slopes of the hills. That day was one of many. Either Mrs. Fairfax required a long course of neglect, or else Sir Eustace really enjoyed Josephine's company; however it might be, he came several times to call at the Manor House, and then invited himself—the squire was only too hospitable—to spend ten days there. Those ten days seemed all too short for poor Josephine, to whom he made sunshine and summer, and who had lost her honest unsophisticated heart. She had liked the young clergyman as one likes one's brothers and cousins, but she loved Sir Eustace as a woman can love once only in her life. It was an episode to him, a mere romantic incident—to her it was the story of her life. He had some compunction as the days wore on, and he could not fail to see that she took literally all his pretty speeches and tender sayings; but there was a great charm in her perfect simplicity and in her unfeigned admiration of all he did and said. At last, however, he grew a little weary of it, and feeling that it 'could lead to nothing'—for he could 'not possibly afford to marry a girl without money'—he said good-bye and rode away.

'I shall hope to see you in the autumn,' he said, as he tenderly pressed her hand when they parted.

Josephine counted the days till the autumn came, but when the squire wrote to invite Sir Eustace to come and shoot his coverts with him early in December—the best coverts—there came no answer for a long time, and then a civil note regretting that other engagements rendered it impossible for Sir Eustace to accept Mr. Mildmay's kind invitation. So the dull days wore on. The young clergyman had ceased to come to the Manor House; he had seen that he was not wanted. He had withdrawn himself, with a sigh or two at first, poor man! but was consoling himself

with Canon Dorwell's youngest daughter. This, though it troubled Mrs. Mildmay, never disturbed Josephine. When Miss Kitty wrote to tell her of her engagement Josephine sent her in return the prettiest, kindest letter of congratulation.

The years slipped on, taking with them Josephine's youth and the pleasant old days. Cissy married a neighbouring squire; Charlotte died after a long and painful illness; Tom reigned in his father's stead, and the old home broke up. Then Miss Josephine came abroad.

The story was simple enough—a story that has repeated and will repeat itself a great many times, I suppose. But to me the wonder and the interest is always fresh. Whether it be a noble thing or a grievous one I do not pretend to say, I only state it as a fact, that there is no man so base and degraded but what some woman can be found who loves him devotedly, and would give her life to do him service. It is not the good people only that are loved; the bad ones have their share, and more than their share, or how, indeed, would this world go on? I cannot but fancy that such devotion, wasted though it seems, must do the worthless object of it some good. So many earnest prayers, so great a love that could last through such long and weary years, could not be quite in vain.

On the following day Sir Eustace was buried in the quiet little cemetery, overshadowed by the eucalyptus trees. The coffin was covered with white roses and Parma violets, placed there by loving hands. There is a white cross now at the head, with his name, and the dates, and a verse from the Psalms.

THE LITTLE SEAMSTRESS.

JENNY WILSON was sitting sewing by the window of the little shabby parlour that looked out on the High Street. It was a dull afternoon in November : the sky was covered with heavy, drab-coloured clouds ; the last few yellow leaves were falling from the great elm in the market-place ; and there was a raw, chill feeling in the air. Jenny was stitching away diligently. She had set herself a task to finish before tea-time—a silk gown to mend and alter for the clergyman's wife, who was going to dine that evening at Reyhill Place.

Jenny was not pretty, but she had a fresh, sweet little face, a large, smiling mouth, pleasant grey eyes, and neat, smooth hair. There was something cheery and courageous about the little woman. Life was not very smooth to her. She had to stitch morning, noon, and night, to keep her invalid mother, and it was hard work to make both ends meet. But no one ever heard Jenny complain. She used to go singing about her work, and up and down the dark creaking stairs that led to her mother's bedroom. Jenny's voice was delightful. It did you good to hear it, it was so clear and sweet and fresh, like the voice of some lark on dewy summer mornings. And it had been very well trained by the organist, who willingly devoted his spare hour of an evening to teaching the little seamstress to play and sing.

The market-place looked very empty when Jenny looked out on it every now and again to rest her eyes. But presently she heard the noise of wheels, and saw the Reyhill carriage with Lady Violet herself in it, and another lady,

Lady Eleanor Arden, a frequent visitor at Reyhill Place, seated by her. Lady Violet was not really pretty, but so bright and lively that one thought her prettier than she was in point of fact. She had a tall figure and a tiny waist, and was always dressed in brilliant colours. Her dresses would have suited no one else, but they became her perfectly. That afternoon she was wearing a bright crimson velvet, almost scarlet, it was so bright a red, and trimmed with rich dark fur; and on her head a Tam o' Shanter cap of the same velvet. Lady Eleanor was a great contrast to her: she was dark and pale, with a beautiful melancholy face and large sad eyes—eyes that seemed to haunt you. She was an heiress. People said that she had cared all her life for Mr. Richard Feyne, one of Lady Violet's penniless younger brothers. Lady Violet, so the story ran, would have been very glad to have her for a sister-in-law, and was always asking her to Reyhill to meet Mr. Feyne; but he never seemed to regard Eleanor in any other light than that of a mere friend. Lady Eleanor had had a great deal of trouble; she had lost both her parents and her only brother, and the wealth that would have been such a pleasure to many people seemed to her only a burden.

To Jenny's astonishment the carriage stopped before her mother's house, and the powdered footman rang the bell. Jenny ran to open the door.

'Does Miss Wilson live here?' asked Lady Violet, from the carriage.

'My name is Jane Wilson,' answered Jenny, with a vague hope that Lady Violet had come to order a dress of her. 'I am a dressmaker.'

Lady Violet sprang out of the carriage and Lady Eleanor followed her. 'We want to hear you sing,' said Lady Violet pleasantly. 'Will you sing to us?'

Jenny's little workroom had never held such grand visitors before. It was a dingy little parlour with horsehair chairs and sofa. There were a few prints on the walls: the Lord-Lieutenant of the county, holding a roll of papers in

his hand, and with a pillar and a curtain in the background; 'The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher after Waterloo'; and a lady simpering at a dove upon her finger.

Jenny sat down shyly to the little old piano, and began, with a certain tremor in her voice, 'Angels ever bright and fair.' The pure notes like the song of a lark ran out through the little room, growing stronger and clearer as Jenny gathered courage and went on.

Lady Violet was warm in her praises of Jenny's singing.

'Will you come up to Reyhill this evening, and sing to us?' she asked. 'We want to have some music; my brother, Mr. Feyne, is so fond of it. What would be your terms?' she went on, hesitatingly, and with a pretty blush of embarrassment, and then she named a sum which filled Jenny with delight. What would it not buy for her invalid mother!

That evening at Reyhill, when the ladies came into the drawing-room after dinner, they found Jenny already awaiting them, as Lady Violet had directed. She had dressed herself in her Sunday black silk, with a bunch of violets fastening her neat muslin fichu, and a silver cross—her only ornament—on black velvet round her neck. Lady Eleanor came up and said a few kind words to her. Eleanor was very gentle, often very silent, but when she spoke you could not choose but listen, the voice was so sweet, and the words themselves never seemed trivial.

The drawing-room at Reyhill was separated from the dining-room by large folding doors and a heavy brocade curtain. As Eleanor was speaking Jenny saw an absent and preoccupied expression come over her face, and, following the direction of Eleanor's eyes, Jenny saw that the curtain had been pushed aside to admit one of the gentlemen. He came up to Lady Violet.

'I could wait no longer,' he said; 'they were discussing hounds and horses, and I thought it would never end. Now, Violet, when is our music to begin?'

Lady Violet introduced him to Jenny as her brother, Mr. Feyne.

'Miss Wilson is going to sing to us, Richard,' she said. 'Will you and Eleanor take her into the hall and settle with her what the music is to be? I must go and "talk pretty,"' she continued, in an undertone to her brother, glancing at the other ladies, 'and presently we will come in and listen.'

The drawing-room at Reyhill was a large room furnished in pale blue and gold, a magnificent but somewhat comfortless apartment. The hall was a far more attractive place. It was very large, and was panelled with stained oak. The walls were decorated with pikes and swords, and with coats-of-arms in brilliant heraldic colours. There was but little furniture in it—a divan or two, a few easy-chairs, and some quaint old settles. It was always twilight in the hall: there were stained windows that threw ruby and purple shadows on the floor by day, and of an evening the only light was a large hanging lamp. The piano stood at one end of the hall, and here at night it was Richard's habit to sit and listen to music in the dark corner beside the piano, where he could watch the singer almost unseen himself.

Jenny followed Lady Eleanor into the hall. Mr. Feyne opened the piano for her and arranged her music. There was a kindness and a courtesy in his manner which were peculiar to him—a great gentleness and deference whenever he addressed a woman. He was by nature very enthusiastic, and whatever the enthusiasm of the moment might be (and the one succeeded the other with great rapidity), it was to him at the time the one great aim and object of his life. Music was now his passion. A few weeks ago he knew little about it, and cared less. Now he could conceive no greater pleasure than listening to music all day and every day. Lady Violet had sung to him until she was hoarse, although her style of music was not according to his taste. She sang nothing but modern ballads and little French and Italian songs, and had attempted in vain to render classical music to

his liking. Then it was that she had taken counsel of the organist, who had recommended Jenny to her.

So Jenny sat at the piano and sang one song after another to him. Her repertory contained chiefly old ballads—such as 'My Mother bids me bind my hair'—and solos from the oratorios. Mr. Feyne said very little, but sat in his dark corner with his eyes fixed on Jenny. It was only when Lady Eleanor said that she feared they were tiring Miss Wilson that he said in a low voice to Jenny: 'Ah, I forgot that I was selfish; I could listen to you for ever.'

Lady Violet, who had come into the hall, rang the bell and asked the servant to show Miss Wilson to the housekeeper's room. 'You will want something after all that singing,' she said kindly 'and I have told Mrs. Benson to have some supper ready for you.'

Jenny was bowing her way out when Mr. Feyne made some hasty steps towards her.

'I cannot thank you enough,' he said gently; 'you have so much reverence and religion in the tones of your voice, that one feels better for listening to you.'

When she was gone the party criticised her singing.

'It is a pity,' said Mr. Reyhill, 'that she doesn't learn something besides those old songs and sacred music. It's all very well of a Sunday evening to have sacred music, but one likes a little change of a weekday.'

Mr. Feyne answered a little hotly that to sing any other kind of music would spoil Miss Wilson's voice. 'Don't you agree with me?' he cried, turning to Lady Eleanor, 'that her style is perfect. Any change would be for the worse.'

'She sings charmingly,' replied Lady Eleanor, a little vaguely. Whereupon Mr. Feyne returned—

'Ah! I forgot, Lady Eleanor. You don't care about music. I wonder at it.'

Eleanor grew crimson. 'I am learning to care for it,' she said, hesitatingly.

The next day at breakfast Richard begged his sister to ask Miss Wilson to come up again and sing. Lady Violet

was only too glad to be able to provide some pleasure for him. She readily acquiesced, but when she and Lady Eleanor were sitting together in the little boudoir, she referred to the subject of Jenny, and found Eleanor far from responsive. Lady Violet's sitting-room was a pretty little room overlooking the lake and distant woods. It was simply crammed with knicknacks and pretty little useless things. There were plenty of little tables covered with china and silver boxes and bric-à-brac. There was no such thing as a reasonably sized table at which anyone could write in comfort. There was a great enamel box of French bonbons which was continually replenished, there were plenty of magazines and novels, and a profusion of delicately scented hothouse flowers. Everybody became hopelessly idle directly they entered the room, and they always spent the morning with their feet on the fender, carrying on the most desultory conversation.

'I am so glad Richard liked her singing,' Lady Violet was saying, 'for it will help me to persuade him to stay on here.'

'Yes,' answered Lady Eleanor, a little drily, 'Miss Wilson's singing may have that desired effect.'

'Why, Nell, what's the matter? there's no harm, surely——'

'No, no,' cried Lady Eleanor quickly, 'nothing! I feel sure she is a very good girl, it is only my folly. I thought—I fancied—oh, never mind. Don't let's talk any more about it. Let's see this new frock of yours. I can't be sure whether I should really like the silver with the salmon colour.' And her cheeks still remained crimson, though she was apparently occupied with the consideration of Lady Violet's wardrobe.

So Jenny came up again and again to Reyhill Place, and sang of an evening to Mr. Feyne. He was always courteous and kind. There were moments, so Jenny fancied, when he entirely lost sight of her personality, and only identified her with her music, as one might think of a bird. He said many things to her in praise of her voice, but never made her any mere compliments. There was, Jenny felt, a

curious relation established between them. Unconsciously, and without analysing the feeling, she looked forward eagerly to these evenings. The dim hall, with its vague scent of violets, the warmth and the luxurious beauty of the house after the chilly dinginess of her home, the sense of easy leisure after the toiling and moiling all day brought to the little seamstress an indefinable sense of pleasure. Had Lady Violet been older she would have foreseen the danger, but such an idea never occurred to her. She was much too busy with her own round of enjoyment. And Mr. Feyne himself, absorbed in the pleasure of the music, and too chivalrous and modest to think he was inspiring any other feeling than that of the merest friendship, where it was his intention to inspire nothing warmer, never dreamt of any drawback to his intimacy with Miss Wilson.

There was a little woman staying at Reyhill who always liked to have her share in what was going on. She was a little old spinster of good family and very small means, who spent her life in visiting—going from one great house to another, playing when others danced, writing letters for the lady of the house, going in to dinner with the bore of the evening, and performing a thousand little duties of the kind in return for the hospitality offered her. She was a toady and a mischief-maker, but was so useful that she was still a welcome guest. She had always an inexhaustible store of confidential gossip, and could make herself very agreeable after her own fashion. In person she was very tiny, with black hair, and bright eyes like shiny beads. She was very anxious to ingratiate herself with Lady Eleanor, to whom she had hitherto paid court in vain, and she saw at a glance the present position of affairs.

'That foolish Richard Feyne,' she said to herself, 'will get himself into a scrape by-and-by, and will lose all his chances with Lady Eleanor (a good 7,000*l.* a year, and that beautiful old place in Hampshire!). He doesn't see what he's doing, and a friendly word in season will put things straight, and make Eleanor my friend for life.'

So, after luncheon one day, she sidled up to Richard, and asked him to come into the hall to see some art needlework she was doing for his sister. When they were alone she began to her unsuspecting companion :

'I dare say you think me very meddlesome, Mr. Feyne ?'

As a matter of fact, Richard had never thought of her at all, and now he looked at her startled and utterly unprepared for what was coming.

'I have known you so long,' she continued, 'that I must give you a warning. I know you don't see the thing as others do, but you really mustn't spend every evening listening to that musical little dressmaker. People are beginning to talk,' she went on, inventing on the spur of the moment, 'and you don't know what you have put into her silly little head—she will expect you to marry her ; and she is head and ears in love. I assure you, if she comes up like this, night after night, to sing to you, there will be all kinds of stories. No one respectable will employ her as dressmaker if she sets her cap at gentlemen !'

The colour rose in Richard's face to the roots of his hair. For one moment he was too angry to speak, and the foolish woman, taking his silence for a sign of consent, went on archly : 'You are throwing away all your chances with Lady Eleanor. Yes, yes ; I know she's been in love with you ever since she was a child in the schoolroom ; but you can't expect this kind of thing to last for ever, and one day she will get tired of refusing all the great people who propose to her.'

By this time Richard had recovered his voice. 'All that you have said to me is utterly false and untrue !' he cried, his voice trembling with anger. 'Neither Miss Wilson nor myself have ever entertained for a moment the ideas you have been good enough to impute to us. And if people have talked, they have simply done so because they are malicious and coarse-minded.'

The little woman was now frightened at what she had done. 'I'm sure I only spoke because I wished to spare

Lady Eleanor pain; anybody could see that she cares for you.'

Richard was beginning to deny this story too, when suddenly he stopped. Something within him told him that this at least was true, though he had never before known it.

The silly woman rambled on incoherently, trying to excuse herself for meddling. 'Of course, it was ruining the girl, and I felt sorry for her—Miss Wilson, I mean. A girl's character is so quickly questioned, and then what remains? I couldn't bear to think of it!'

'Do you mean to say,' Richard demanded, furious, 'that Miss Wilson's reputation has suffered in the slightest degree, or that she has been lowered in the eyes of the world, by my fault?'

His opponent prevaricated, hesitated, and then finally agreed that it was so. She was so terrified that she scarcely knew what she was saying, and her one idea was to escape from Richard, who, erect before her, his handsome face still handsomer with passion, and his angry eyes fixed upon her, was ready, so she declared, 'to kill her!'

'There is only one remedy,' Mr. Feyne said slowly; 'I must ask Miss Wilson to be my wife. That is, it appears to me, the only way to put everything straight'; and he strode out of the room, leaving the wretched creature to recover her senses. Without asking anybody's advice, without pausing to consider, he proceeded to act on his blind impulse. It was a pouring wet day; the rain had been steadily falling all day, and the ground was sodden and the trees dripping with moisture. The landscape looked blurred and blotted, and the only sound in the air was the regular rhythmic sob of the rain. Richard passed before the hall windows, wrapped in the black Spanish cloak that Lady Violet used to call his 'conspirator's cloak.' He heard a tap on the glass, and turned round to see Lady Eleanor, who smiled and waved her hand to him. 'I wish you joy of your wet walk!' she cried laughingly. Richard

moved hastily away; a sudden consciousness seized him that this really was the woman he loved. He had never realised it before; now it was too late. He hurried down to the little town and rang the bell at Jenny's house. The little apprentice showed him up into the parlour, where presently Jenny, with a flushed and startled face, made her appearance. He went up to her, regardless of his dripping cloak that was making puddles on the threadbare carpet, and began earnestly:

'I am afraid, Miss Wilson, that you have been annoyed by these abominable reports and scandalous stories.' He paused, taking Jenny's blushes for a confirmation of his words. 'I am deeply grieved,' he went on, 'that anyone should have dared to make my name the source of any discomfort to you; but if you wish these stories can be silenced at once. I have come to ask you to be my wife.'

It seemed to Jenny as if the room reeled with her. For one moment, and for one moment only, she hesitated. He continued in a faltering voice, 'I am poor, as you know, but I would endeavour to make you happy if you could be content with the little that I can offer.'

Then Jenny turned her honest eyes towards him, and looked him full in the face. 'I have heard no slanderous reports, sir,' she said with simple dignity; 'and even had I heard them I could put an end to them. You have done me too much honour. I could never really suit you. You ought to marry a lady; and,' dropping her voice almost to a whisper, 'you don't love me, sir; and I couldn't marry anyone who didn't. I can't thank you enough. I shall remember your goodness to my dying day; but you must excuse me, sir, and one day you will be glad for what I have done.'

The tears unbidden rose to her eyes, but, courageous to the end, she made him a little curtsey that had, he felt, a world of grace and dignity in it, and left the room.

So the matter ended. But three months after, when Mr. Feyne and his bride were spending their honeymoon

in Hampshire, they went for a long ride over the downs, and Richard told Eleanor the whole story. She gave a cry of surprise, and then, putting her hand softly on his arm, 'Ah, Richard,' she said, 'don't you see, she loved you too well to do you any harm, and it was because she loved you that she refused you?'

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LADY MARY'S CHOICE

THERE was a ball at Lady Hayne's—it was the last great ball of the season—and the rooms were beginning to grow empty as the summer night, which had never been really dark, was melting away into dawn. The clear grey light was creeping over the house-tops and brightening the dingy green in the square. There was the fresh chill feeling of sunrise in the air. Two sickly gas-lamps were still flickering feebly, and a cat was venturing stealthily up a deserted street that looked clean and bright in the first rays of the sun. Lady Hayne's house was a corner house; one side was all carriages and confusion, departing guests, sleepy coachmen, and hoarse linkmen. The other side, which looked on the square, was all peace and quiet. Presently there was a rustle of a ball gown, and a girl, followed by her partner, stepped out of the hot, dazzling ball-room on to the cool, dim balcony. The girl was very tall and stately, with a beautiful face and heavy masses of black hair. The forehead was low, but finely shaped, and the eyebrows straight and level above the cloudy grey eyes, eyes that were like some steel-coloured winter sea, until a quick smile lit them up and transfigured the whole face. Her companion was about the middle height, very fair—as fair indeed as a girl—and delicately and slightly made. There was something indescribably boyish and gentle in his face, that reminded many people of a Saint Sebastian. The two went to the edge of the balcony, and looked down on the sooty bushes in the square, where the sparrows were twittering

and calling to each other. From within they could hear one of those melancholy waltzes that sound like the moaning of the wind, and the rhythmic beat of 'the dancers dancing in tune.'

'How unhappy the music sounds!' said the girl. 'Poor old tune! it has been all the fashion this year, and thousands of people have danced to it. Next year it will be old and worthless—it will be played only by the barrel-organs.'

'Yet I for one,' said her companion simply, 'shall always have a kindly feeling for it. How many times have you and I danced together to it?'

'Yes,' she answered, thoughtfully; 'how many times! But this is the last time for this season, at least. I don't know how it is, but there is something very sad in standing here watching the dawn and listening to this wailing music.'

And she turned to him with a very sweet smile in her grey eyes, and put her hand through his arm, and the two passed from the daylight into the brilliant ball-room.

That evening, when Lady Mary Francis had returned from the ball to her quiet, cool bedroom that overlooked the fresh, green, and gay flower-beds of her own garden, she lingered in her white dressing-gown by the open window, leaning upright against the window-frame, her mind full of happy thoughts, and a vague smile upon her parted lips. Life was strangely pleasant to her. She acknowledged to herself for the first time how much she cared for Philip Borlase. She had known him all her life, and ever since they were children together she had been conscious that he loved her. She had compared him with all the men she knew, and thought there was no one equal to him, just as in the old days she had found no playmate like him.

And now there rose before her a vision of a far-off Cornish creek where the brown oak woods touch the shore, and where, in the soft February days, the banks that fringe the black rocks are already yellow with primroses; a broad

expanse of blue-green water, and a boat, and in that boat a boy and girl—herself and Philip—floating with the tide. Or a wild moor, with grey crags and sweet heather, and a distant sea wrapped in silver haze, and the same boy and girl, on shaggy ponies, riding all the summer afternoons.

Then she thought of the present; and a thrill of triumph ran through her when she reflected that she, the greatest heiress in England, would give unreservedly all her possessions, herself, everything, to Philip Borlase, the penniless barrister. She had neither father nor mother, brother nor sister, to claim her affection. It should be for Philip alone. There should be nothing wanting to make life perfect. She pictured to herself her stately home in the country, with its broad park and splendid terraces, the library with its rare editions, and the gallery with all its treasures of art. She looked round her complacently in her London home, and thought of the wide, cool rooms, the magnificent pictures, the garden and tall trees, in the very heart of the crowded streets, and felt that she had everything to satisfy her passionate love for all that was beautiful. There was nothing, no, not one discordant note, to jar on her sense of harmony.

Presently she paced slowly to her other window that looked upon the street. Heavy waggons laden with fruit and vegetables were rumbling by on their road to Covent Garden. The bright daylight was pouring down on the dusty pavement. The new day had begun for the workaday world. A poor woman with a baby in her arms was creeping along; a sudden movement of Mary's made her look up, and Mary saw a pale face, old in sorrow and suffering, though young in actual years, seared with the marks of some disease, and bearing in the dull eyes the expression of hopeless misery. The woman caught the look of horror in Mary's face, and mechanically held up the child, a wretched, wasted creature. Mary snatched up her purse, and averting her face, flung out some money, shuddering. She had that

abhorrence of disease and suffering which is almost constitutional in some people. The sight of misery revolted her. She gave lavishly to charitable institutions, yet she avoided the sight of sickness and want with an eagerness which at times horrified her herself. There rose before her the story of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus. 'There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores.' The words ran in her head like a refrain, and seemed to haunt her now. The contrast of the luxury, wealth, and beauty on one side, and the misery, squalor, and filth on the other, stood before her in all its terrible significance. Yet something—a physical horror, a thrill of repulsion through every fibre of her nature—seemed to stand between her and the great suffering world.

When Lady Mary Francis left London that summer for her lodge in Scotland her friends and relations expected daily to hear the announcement of her engagement to Philip Borlase. But a circumstance supervened which altered the condition of things. Philip, when shooting on the moors, met with a terrible accident, which deprived him of the sight of both eyes. Blind, helpless, having irretrievably lost his chance of distinguishing himself in his profession, he was far too proud and too honourable to think of appealing to Lady Mary's pity. He had a feverish longing to speak with her once more, even if it were only to say good-bye, but he would not seek any opportunity of meeting her, and Lady Mary held aloof. The long winter and spring months went by, and he still lingered, sick at heart and weary of life, in the little Cornish rectory, which was his married sister's home, and where, at all times a welcome guest, he was now received with greater affection than ever.

One day in early summer, Mary Francis was sitting in her pleasant morning-room in London, with a large basket of flowers before her. There were masses of sweet-scented pinks, yellow June lilies, monthly roses, pansies 'with the

day-spring at their hearts,' red-and-white peonies, tall foxgloves, and bunches of pale lilac—it was the last lilac of that spring—and snowy guelder-roses. Mary was listlessly grouping them in jars and bowls, her thoughts a thousand miles away all the while. There had come a change over her since last year. The beautiful face wore a hard embittered look. There was a harsh and defiant expression in the cloudy eyes, and yet a very weary line at the mouth. All the grace and brightness had gone from her. Nevertheless she was handsomer than ever. She had a curious fascination. One after another the richest and most distinguished men in London proposed to her, and were in turn coldly refused. People said she was like the Alpine Jungfrau, covered with eternal snow—pure, heartless, frozen.

Mary had the artistic touch. Beneath her careless fingers the flowers grouped themselves in beautiful harmony, just as any dress or shawl she put on fell of its own accord into picturesque folds. She was idly placing a great bough of Scotch laburnum into a deep brown jar, when the door opened, and Mrs. Treherne, Philip's sister, was announced. A tall slender woman, with a sweet faded face, entered the room. She was dressed very neatly, but a woman's eyes would have detected the fact that her gown had not been new this year, nor even the year before ; that her bonnet was home-made, and that her gloves had been skilfully mended.

'I was up in London for a few days, to take Maudie to see a surgeon about her knee,' she said, blushing crimson, as Mary rose to meet her, 'and I thought I must come and take the chance of finding you at home.'

She did not say what the other guessed at once, that her first object in coming up to London was to see Mary Francis, and to try to discover from her whether she still cared for Philip. But woman-like, each pretended to the other that this was a mere ordinary call. They sat together on the sofa, Mary asking questions about the children, and Ina answering them.

'What! six children now, are there? Four younger than my godchild May? How strange it seems to think that you have been married ten years, Ina! And I suppose you are happier than ever?'

'Yes,' said Ina, a little plaintively. 'Of course, with so many little ones, there are great anxieties; but they are dear good children, and Charlie is so much stronger now since we came back to Cornwall. I'm very busy, of course. I don't keep a governess, and I couldn't let Charlie tire himself with teaching, so I take the children for their lessons. And they grow so quickly, too, it is difficult to make clothes fast enough for them. But I always liked plain sewing. And then, too, in the parish there is a great deal to be done. Charlie's chest still hurts him at times, so I spare him all the school-work and visiting that I can. But Maudie is quite handy already in the house with the three little ones, although she is only nine years old. She taught little Frank his letters entirely. Oh, yes, Mary, I have a great deal to be thankful for, and I am very happy on the whole.'

And she went on unconsciously describing her daily life of unselfishness and simple devotion, a life of toil and continual struggle with narrow means, 'to make both ends meet.' It was no wonder that the face which at twenty was so fresh and pretty was now faded and careworn.

'You never come to Cornwall now,' Ina said, in a tentative way; 'and when we were children you were so fond of Trescawen—you used to say it was your favourite home. We wish you would live there more.'

'I can't go there now,' Mary answered shortly.

But there was in Ina that quick pertinacity which is the characteristic and the strength of so many gentle people.

'Everybody wishes you would go there—your tenants and everyone—and Philip.'

Ina was frightened when she had spoken. Mary flushed crimson; she looked at Ina with hard cold eyes that seemed to have a kind of glitter in them, and asked, in a

measured, distinct voice, 'Did Mr. Borlase commission you to tell me this?'

'No, indeed,' cried Ina hurriedly; 'he would be very, very angry with me if he knew. He thought I was only coming to London to consult the surgeon about Maudie's knee. But it breaks my heart to see him, and so—and so——'

She left her sentence unfinished, while Mary still looked at her. But the crimson flush had died out of her white face, and the grey eyes were full of pity and self-reproach.

'It breaks my heart, too, to think of him,' Lady Mary said, slowly.

Ina started to her feet with an impulse of hope, but Mary drew back.

'No,' she said, 'you do not understand me. I do not want to see him. Ah!' she cried, suddenly breaking into a bitter appeal, 'don't despise me! I am the hardest woman that ever lived. But I am miserable. I loathe myself. You can never understand me,' she went on, seeing Ina's bewildered face. 'You are one of the women who are never happy unless they are sacrificing themselves for something or for somebody. It would cost you nothing to—to devote yourself to a blind man. It would be happiness to you. But I am not tender; I am not devoted. I would, if I could, give your brother the sight of my own eyes and then kill myself. But I could never bind myself to him as he is now. Ah!' she cried, with a note of pathos in her deep voice that seemed to Ina like the cry of some wild creature, 'I have no heart. The only thing I love is my own freedom. But'—and she checked herself hastily —'there is no reason why I should inflict all this on you'; and she began to speak in a dry, cold voice of other things, of Ina's stay in London, the new opera, the heat.

'Come and see my new picture,' she said, as Ina rose to go. Mary led the way into the cool, long drawing-room. Ina glanced admiringly at the beautiful furniture, the profusion of hothouse flowers that filled the air with their sweet

cloying scent, and the hundred and one rare and pretty things scattered about in the room—at everything, in short, that Mary took as a mere matter of course, and a necessary part of daily life. Lady Mary paused before a small picture of a moonlit sea. It was very delicate and very beautiful—a great expanse of dark, black waters, and a single streak of light illuminating a narrow strip of sea. A ship was in the act of crossing the shining waves, to plunge again into the darkness.

That winter Mary Francis and her aunt, who lived with her, went abroad. They spent some months in Rome, and returned homeward in the spring through the north of Italy and along the Riviera. Mary found a certain pleasure in the sunshine and the brilliant southern colouring.

There were even times when she took heart again. Nevertheless it seemed to her that her old interest in life was gone for ever.

They spent Passion Week at Bordighera, a quiet little town in the midst of plantations of palms and grey olive-yards. There was to be a religious procession by moonlight on Holy Thursday, and that evening Mary Francis and her aunt and cousin stood waiting on the Capo, the sea-washed promontory below the old town. The night was calm and tepid, and in the woods the air was full of the scent of the spring flowers. Here on the Capo there was a little breeze, blowing in fresh and salt from the sea that was tossing below in the white moonlight. Presently the distant sound of chanting broke the stillness, and then slowly and solemnly a procession with lighted candles passed out through the massive archway of the old town and wound round the Capo, singing. The voices were rough and hoarse, but pathetic in their simplicity. They seemed to have something of the surge of the sea in them. The Brothers of St. Bartholomew, in red and white vestments, carried the banners and the sacred emblems. The great crucifix shone white in the moonlight, and as it passed the Italian peasants reverently uncovered their heads and the women crossed

themselves. It was like some scene in the Middle Ages, Mary thought, as she stood wrapped in her long black cloak watching the procession winding its way back into the arches of the little fortified town.

The chanting died away in the quiet night, and the little groups of English people who had come to see the procession met together on the Capo, on their way home through the woods to their different hotels and villas. The light fell on the face of a blind young man, leaning on the arm of a friend, who was describing to him what the rest had seen.

Mary recognised him in an instant. I cannot explain the change in her; I only know that such things are; but at the sight of the patient boyish face it seemed to her as if, of a sudden, all the ice and snow in her frozen heart melted. Nothing but tenderness and an overwhelming love and pity remained. She stepped towards him and put out her hand, that trembled a little despite herself, and said, with a smile —oh! so sweet and penitent a smile—

'Mr. Borlase, do you not remember me, Mary Francis?'

Philip took her hand, flushing crimson at the sound of her voice, and the whole party walked together down the steep side of the Capo. When they reached the olive-woods it came to pass, somehow or other, that Mary and Philip found themselves left behind in the dusky woods, while the footsteps and voices of the others died away in the distance. There was something solemn in the dim woods, full of fragrance as they were, a strange stillness, almost a sense of awe. Mary, in her ghostly white dress and long black cloak, stood with her hands clasped tightly together, on the narrow path. Philip had felt his way to the twisted trunk of a huge olive, and was leaning against it. The pale rays full on his face made him look more than ever like a Saint Sebastian.

The resignation and fortitude in the boyish face seemed to cut Mary to the heart. She longed to beseech him to

reproach her, to complain of his misfortunes, to do anything rather than stand there facing her with those dark motionless eyes, and with that terribly patient smile upon his lips.

At last he very gently broke the silence.

'I came here to see—to speak to you' (the tremor in his voice as he changed his words hurt her like a physical pain), 'and to ask a favour of you—only one—and I will never ask another. Don't be afraid,' he went on hurriedly, 'I could never dream of asking you to tie yourself to me. That is all over now that I am blind. Only let me pass my hand once over your face that now I cannot see—the face I loved—and then that shall be all. I will never trouble you again.'

His voice faltered, and in the moonlight, broken by the black branches, Mary saw the tears gather in the poor blind eyes, and shine and tremble. She took his hand, and throwing back her hood, she laid it softly on her hair. He passed it very slowly and reverently over her brow, her closed eyes, and flushed cheeks, but when it reached her quivering lips they parted and kissed it. He uttered a cry and groped towards her with his arms outstretched, and then paused.

'Ah, no—no! it was pity, only pity. God bless you for your pity.'

But she caught his arms with her quick hands and put them round her, and pressed her hair to his lips.

'No—not pity, Philip. This is love!'

For it was as though she had suddenly attained to the true knowledge and understanding of life, and all her dreams of the beautiful and the perfect vanished before the reality of love and devotion. For so it ever is that

'God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.'

CECILIA VERNER'S FORTUNE

It was a hot day in July. The grass looked like Indian matting, it was so brown, and there were great thirsty cracks in the ground. The air was simmering with heat, but everything else was quiet under the burning noonday sun. There was a cool retreat—as far as anything could be cool—in the lime avenue at Oldham Court, and here two people sat together, while the bees murmured drowsily overhead, and a little hot wind stirred the topmost branches every now and again. They were not talking much—it was too hot for animated conversation; and besides, both these people were out of spirits. They had been engaged seven years, and as matters now stood there seemed every chance of their waiting seven more. Cecilia Verner was the squire's eldest daughter. She was slight and fair, with a sweet, gentle face. She had been thought very pretty in the county when she first 'came out' at the Hardingbourne ball, and had been greatly admired. Then she had engaged herself, a year afterwards, to her penniless cousin William Walmer, and no one had taken any further interest in her. The pretty roses had faded from her cheeks as the years went by, and a grave careworn look had replaced the bright smile.

'How poor Cecy Verner has gone off!' people said. 'It's that stupid engagement, and Will Walmer never can have any more means than he has now, and I don't see who is to give him a living.'

Nor were Mr. and Mrs. Verner well pleased. The

Walmers were certainly cousins, but in a lower social position, and, except Will, there was no member of the family with whom they cared to be intimate. Will was a hard-working young curate in a big, neglected country parish not far from Oldham, and in an evil hour (as Mrs. Verner afterwards considered) he had been asked to spend Christmas at the Court. To everyone's consternation the two cousins had returned from skating one afternoon, and had announced their engagement. They had persisted in it, spite of the opposition they met with on all sides. Cecy gave up her share of 'going out' to her younger sisters, and studied the question of domestic economy. 'Directly you can both of you make up 700*l.* a year together, the wedding shall take place,' the squire had said. Alas! so far they could only make up 400*l.*, and that included the 150*l.* which the squire had promised to allow Cecy.

Poor people! No wonder that they felt depressed, for in addition to the dreary prospect of waiting indefinitely, Will had been obliged, by the death of his vicar, to give up his curacy near Oldham, and to take one in the north of England, 'hundreds of miles away,' as Cecy sadly observed. It was their last day together for many a long month, and that very morning Will had had a harassing interview with Mr. Verner.

'It's for you and Cecilia to consider whether you had not both of you better make up your minds to give it up. It was a silly business from the first, and to speak my mind out, my boy, you are both wasting your time.'

The same thing had been said to Cecy many hundred times—with variations.

Cecilia was poking the point of her parasol into a crack in the baked earth, and Will, with his hat over his honest square face, was lying flat on the ground. At last Cecy spoke.

'Will, I've been thinking.' Her voice was very tremulous.

'Well?'

'Only this. Perhaps I am a drag to you. If it's better —for you—that we should consider it hopeless—I am ready.'

Will's voice came out gruff and muffled from under his hat.

'It's you that it matters about. What odds can it make to me, beyond being a hope and a bright spot in my life?'

'Ah, Will!' cried Cecy, with conviction, 'for me it is everything in the world.'

So matters remained as they were, and they agreed that they would wait and hope, even if they waited and hoped for another seven years. But when Will was gone there were many dreary days in store for Cecy. Her younger sister Amelia, who had married a rich neighbour—'over Miss Cecy's head,' as the village people said—used to drive over in her pretty little pony-cart to see her, and would talk in the brutally prosperous and unsympathetic way some people employ to their less fortunate friends.

'You see you're throwing your life away. All your youth is passing, and what have you to show for it? It's so different with me, you know. I certainly do have the best time of any woman I know. Frank would give me anything I fancied. And then, of course, my position is a very pleasant one. I can entertain as much as ever I like, and just the kind of people I like. Now, you know, my dear Cecy, if ever you are able to marry Will (and I am sure, poor dear, I wish it would come all right, though I don't see how it ever can) you would be shut up in a little poky country parsonage for the rest of your life, with only those dowdy Walmer girls and that vulgar Tom Walmer and his wife as your visitors. Of course Will is a dear good fellow, and we are all very fond of him. But it's all this waiting, and then the odious poverty, I think of.'

Then Amelia would press Cecy to come and stay with her. 'It will distract your thoughts, and we are always having people. Next week there are two good archery meetings, and a big garden party at the castle, and I shall

have a house full for it; but I dare say we shall be able to squeeze you in somehow. You wouldn't mind the little box-room next the nursery, would you?'

Or she would go over and over all the difficulties in Cecy's way, until gentle, desponding Cecilia would ache all over.

'I wish I could see, my poor dear Cecy, any hope of any sort or kind, but Frank has no church patronage. Who on earth is likely to give Will a living? It isn't as though he were a wonderful preacher. You won't misunderstand me, Cecy, and think I am running him down, for I am sure we all look upon him as a most excellent parish clergyman. Frank says always that Will is one of the most hard-working men he knows, and just suited for some country place. But then, in these days talent is so much thought of.'

Meanwhile, Will was working in his new curacy. It was in the outskirts of a manufacturing town in that part of England where all the country seems a great network of towns and suburbs. Everything was black, and the air was charged with noisome smells. The river was a turbid, discoloured flood between barren banks, on which were here and there a dying oak or a soiled willow.

The people were rough, but kind-hearted. However, Will was blunt and plain enough himself to understand rough and ready ways. He was an honest, simple, good-hearted young fellow, brilliant in no way, but always trustworthy, very humble, and with a strong sense of duty. People are sometimes taken at their own valuation. Will's estimate of himself was very low, and, with the exception of Cecy, his cousins and the county society round Oldham had looked down upon him. But the sick and poor in his parish, and the children in the village school, thought there was no one in the world to equal him. Bit by bit Will gained ground in his new parish. There was plenty of work to be done, and it was very different work from that he had been accustomed to in the south. The principal landholder

in the parish was a lady—a widow, Lady Honoria Wyngate —but she was away when Will arrived. He went, however, one day to the Hall, to speak to the housekeeper, who was Lady Honoria's almoner in her absence, and dispensed soups and jellies to the sick and needy at the clergyman's request. The house was a great pile of grey stone, stained with soot. It faced a huge gaunt avenue of tarnished trees, leading to a large artificial lake full of black water. The park was dreary enough. The once fine trees were dying inch by inch from the effects of the neighbouring chemical works. But the shrubberies were extremely beautiful, and the lawns were carefully kept, and brilliant with geraniums and calceolarias, vivid spots of colour in the dull scenery.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Yerrin, was a stately old lady, who at once promised that every sort of nourishing food should be sent to the sick child on whose behalf Will had come. 'Her ladyship,' she said, 'never would allow any poor person in the parish to want for anything.'

She asked Will whether he would care to see the pictures, and led him through great dismantled rooms, where hung a beautiful collection of works of art. Will knew little, and cared less, about pictures ; but he could not help feeling that there must be priceless gems among those that were now shown him. When they were in the great drawing-room, and Mrs. Yerrin was pointing out in a dignified manner the beauties of a Van Dyck, they heard a carriage drive up to the door, and then the peal of the bell. Mrs. Yerrin stepped to the window, to see whom it could be. She uttered a little scream. 'Oh sir ! it's her ladyship herself ! '

And she bustled off, leaving poor Will irresolute in the middle of the room. He heard an opening of doors and a hum of voices, among which he distinguished some full deep tones, and rightly concluded them to belong to Lady Honoria. He debated in his own mind whether he should endeavour to escape at once, but he reflected that he should probably meet her in the front hall on his way out. Then

the door opened, and a tall dark woman, dressed in some cool grey material, entered the room, followed by Mrs. Yerrin, who was saying some confused sentences in an apologetic tone.

Lady Honoria was very handsome; she was tall and stately, with an erect figure and a rigidly dignified carriage. There was a weary expression of discontent on her face that marred the perfect beauty of the clear-cut features. No one who ever saw her could fail to understand that she was a proud woman who had suffered cruelly. Yet it was possible to conceive that the hard dark eyes could light up with tenderness and affection, and that the drooping, melancholy lines of the mouth might break into a very sweet smile. However that might be, Lady Honoria was, at all events, a very alarming person to meet for the first time. She had that scorn for the majority of her fellow-creatures which cannot be concealed, but betrays itself in every look and tone. She had, when a girl of eighteen, been married, almost against her will, to an enormously rich man who had treated her shamefully. He drank himself to death after five years of brutality and cruelty towards his wife, which she endured with contemptuous courage. Such a life would have broken the heart of another woman. It turned Honoria to stone; she was harsh, bitter, and unforgiving. She laughed scornfully at the paraphernalia of mourning which in the first years of her widowhood custom imposed upon her.

'Why should I wear black?' she said, with a hard laugh. 'I ought instead to have worn it all these five years if mourning is any sign of wretchedness. But now my deliverance has come. It would be far more sensible if I had worn black when my poor old dog died—he always was good to me; or when that cripple-child in the lodge died. I loved her, and she loved me. But from my husband I never received anything but insults.'

Mr. Wyngate had left her all his property unconditionally.

'No money' she said, 'in the world could ever make amends. If I only thought he could know it I would not touch one single penny of it, but as there is something to be done for the people on the estate and the charities in the town, which might remain undone if I refused to take the money, I accept it, though I despise it—and him.'

Her friends had hoped that time would soften the remembrance of her suffering, but years went by, and at two-and-thirty she was still as hard and bitter as ever.

Will was by nature very shy, and had a habit of stammering. But he pulled himself together, and said, frankly, 'I hope I'm not in the way, but I came to ask Mrs. Yerrin for some soup or jelly for a consumptive child in the town, and she was kind enough to show me the pictures.'

And he was going to bow himself out, when Lady Honoria stopped him.

'Pray finish looking at the pictures,' she said frigidly. 'I wish some time to speak to you, Mr. Walmer, or to the rector, on the subject of a school-treat, if you will be good enough to spare me a few minutes.'

'Any time you like will do for me,' answered Will. 'The rector is ill, so it is out of the question for him. When should I come? As to the pictures,' he added, honestly, 'I know nothing about them, and I don't care particularly about art either. So I needn't trouble you today by staying to see them now.'

Lady Honoria was amused at his frankness. 'If you have the time at your disposal,' she said, a little less frigidly, 'perhaps you will stay and discuss the matter with me. But if the pictures are no object, there is no need to stay in this dismantled room. We should be more comfortable on the lawn under the beech-tree—and tea can be brought out there.'

Accordingly, they sat under the beech on the lawn.

Will was astonished at the knowledge Honoria displayed of the individual needs of the parish. Her voice and manner softened when she spoke of the sick and needy. Once Will fancied there were tears in the proud, dark eyes when he talked, in his simple outspoken way, of the consumptive child on whose behalf he had come to the Hall.

'He's only a little chap,' he said, 'about five—but I don't think he can live long. Not that one could wish him to, with that cough that keeps him awake all night. It's a wretched house, too—a drunken mother, and almost all the furniture out at pawn. And the heat is dreadful in the low stuffy room.'

A little breeze was just ruffling the trees, and bringing with it the scent of the heliotrope and the mignonette in the beds. The pretty tea-table before them was laden with delicate china, glistening silver, hothouse grapes and peaches, and golden honey. The thought of the sick child, deprived of all except the barest necessities, in the hot, comfortless room, rose before Honoria, and she sighed. Her troubles had never hardened her heart to the poor. It was her own class—'Society'—that she despised and hated.

'I will go and see him,' she said.

A week later, a heavy, thundery evening, when Will chanced to look in on the sick child, he found Honoria seated by the bedside talking to the boy. She had a big bunch of choice flowers in her hand, and there was a large basket full of good things on the table. As the young clergyman entered she resumed her proud, chilly manner.

'I'll come again another time, as Tom has company already,' said Will.

But the child raised a piteous cry at this, and stretched out his little wasted arms.

'No. Don't go,' said Lady Honoria more kindly. 'Tom wants you.' And she made room for him. In another moment Tom had one of Will's big hands between his little transparent ones, and was softly patting it.

'That's what he always does,' said Will, apologetically.

When Lady Honoria and Will left the house together, she asked him, in that imperious way of hers which made a request sound like a command, to walk part of the way back with her to discuss parish matters.

Great masses of tawny clouds were rolling up the sky, and from time to time there was an ominous growl of distant thunder. When they reached the edge of the shrubberies there was a dazzling flash, quickly followed by a deafening clap, and then by large, heavy drops of rain.

'We'd better run for it!' said Will; and they started off in time to get in before they were quite drenched. The hurried movement had brought the colour to Lady Honoria's cheeks, and a brightness to her eyes. She looked almost girlish, and it seemed as though her icy manner had thawed for the time. She pressed Will to stay for dinner, as there seemed no chance of the storm clearing for some time, and he passed a very pleasant evening with Lady Honoria and Miss Chapman, her old governess, who lived with her. Miss Chapman was a mild old lady with weak blue eyes and tight flaxen curls. Lady Honoria was always gentle and considerate towards her. In the drawing-room, after dinner, Honoria sat down to the piano and sang song after song in her deep, rich, stirring voice. She had 'tears' in her voice; a vibrating tone of pathos that seemed to search the inmost recesses of the heart. All that was tender and good in her seemed to speak in those pure, powerful notes.

And so an intimacy sprang up and ripened between these very dissimilar people. It became at last an understood thing that Will was a privileged person at the Hall. He was always a welcome guest, and gradually Lady Honoria showed her better side to him, and he learnt to know and admire the real tenderness, the depth, and the loyalty of the nature which had been so cruelly warped. His whole heart was set on Cecy, and it never occurred to him there could be any danger in such an intimacy. There was none for him, and he was far too modest to think there could be any for

Lady Honoria. He never spoke of his engagement to Cecilia, but this was only from a reticence that was habitual to him. He concluded that his engagement was generally known, but he had never supposed that his affairs could interest other people. Once or twice, when Honoria had been specially kind and friendly, it had crossed his mind how pleasant it would be to speak to her sometimes of Cecy, but he checked the thought by remembering how boring the rhapsodies of lovers are always said to be. He never suspected the strange, unacknowledged sweetness, and the new interest in life, and belief in happiness and in goodness, which his friendship had given to Lady Honoria. It may seem curious that so ordinary a young man as Will Walmer should have called forth feeling in a nature like Honoria's, but no one can foretell what chance movement in a room will set a musical instrument vibrating. In some such strange way Will had struck unawares the dormant human chord in Honoria's heart, and had drawn perilously sweet music from it.

It was impossible that the intimacy should pass unnoticed by the neighbourhood. One day the rector's daughter, a sour, disagreeable old maid, handed to the young clergyman, with an acid smile, a newspaper which announced that a marriage was arranged between the Reverend William Walmer and Lady Honoria Wyngate.

'I am dying to know whether it's true,' she said, 'and whether you have thrown over Miss Verner?'

Will read the paragraph, turned scarlet, indignantly contradicted the report, and fled home. What was he to do? It was most annoying. No doubt Lady Honoria would be very much vexed, and their pleasant friendship must come to an end. He avoided her and the Hall for about a fortnight, at the end of which he received an invitation from her to dine any evening that week that suited him. He had no choice but to accept it. Indeed, he was pleased to see that Lady Honoria was evidently not displeased with him,

and he resolved to be as little constrained in manner as was possible.

It was a bitter December evening. There was a black east wind that threatened snow; it seemed to freeze the blood in your veins, and it was a pleasant change to come in from the dark ice-bound world outside to the great stately rooms, warmed by blazing fires, and sweet with the scent of hothouse flowers. Will thought he had never seen Lady Honoria looking so beautiful, or indeed so kind. She was dressed in some rich soft material of a delicate peach colour, high to the throat. Many-coloured opals shone in her dark hair, fastened the clouds of filmy lace, and secured the spray of pale hothouse roses on her breast.

'I shall talk to her about Cecy; she looks so friendly, I don't think it will bore her,' thought the misguided man, as she came to meet him with a bright look on her face.

No one spoke much at dinner. Miss Chapman seemed agitated, and Will fancied she wished to convey to him something she was not able to express. When they met once more in the drawing-room, Miss Chapman rose hurriedly from her chair, mumbled something about fetching some work; and then, carefully looking round, to see that Honoria was not observing her, she fixed her eyes piteously on Will's face.

'Oh, my dear—' she said imploringly, 'oh, my dear young man, you will be considerate'—and she was gone.

Lady Honoria was standing by the fire, with her back turned to Will. She was shading her face with a large hand-screen made of the brilliant plumage of some tropical bird. At last she turned to him, but with her face still hidden.

'Mr. Walmer!'

He came to her, wondering, and was still more surprised when she lowered the screen, and he saw that her eyes were full of tears. Her voice sounded very gentle. You might

almost have caught the sound of a sob in the deep, low tones.

'Why have you never been to see me for so long? Was it on account of the report? *That* need not part us.'

'I'm so glad,' said Will, blunderingly; 'you've been so kind to me, I could not bear to be the cause of annoyance to you. I don't know what I should have done without your kindness, for I didn't know a soul here when I came. And now, if you say we can be friends as before——'

'Friends as before, Mr. Walmer.' Her voice was now constrained and forced.

'Yes—then it's all right,' concluded Will.

There was a long pause.

It is astonishing how sometimes the proudest people will humble themselves. Honoria turned away her face; and then, in tones in which love and pride contended:

'It was not—not—because I was rich that you didn't come?'

Ah! the blindness of our honest, simple-minded young clergyman! It was only afterwards, when he thought it all over, that he guessed her meaning. As it was, he answered:

'Well, I thought you would be vexed by the report, and would think it was my fault. You know, Lady Honoria, I have been engaged this long while to my cousin, Miss Verner, and whoever put that nonsense into the papers ought to have known all about it. It's no secret. We've been engaged nearly eight years now, and we are only waiting until I get a living. I do wish you knew Cecy. You couldn't help liking her.'

Lady Honoria had turned very white, but she listened quietly, and even apparently with sympathy, to his story, and his praises of Cecilia. But when he took her hand at parting, it struck him that she looked ill and tired.

There was, however, a letter awaiting him at his lodgings, which soon put everything else out of his mind. It was an offer of a small country living in Wiltshire, from an old college

friend. His marriage with Cecy was now possible; and in a few months he was happily settled in his rectory, with Cecy for his wife. One day, when Will took up the newspaper, he saw, with a start of surprise, the announcement of the death of Lady Honoria Wyngate. There had been an outbreak of typhus in the town, the paper said, and after nursing the sick in the most devoted manner, she had succumbed herself to the illness. Will was much grieved, but it was just in the early days of his marriage, and it seemed almost impossible to think long of anything else except his and Cecy's happiness. However, the next morning brought him news that concerned him nearly. Lady Honoria had, with the exception of several legacies, left him all her enormous wealth.

Cecilia is now very rich, richer, far, than Amelia; but Amelia says: 'Nothing could ever make Will and Cecy smart. They will always be dear good creatures, given up entirely to good works, and all that sort of thing; but dreadfully dowdy, you know!'

HELENA

THERESA ASHLEIGH was the last of an impoverished younger branch of an old and wealthy family. Her father was a clergyman of small means, to whom one of the family livings had been given. The relationship between him and his patron, the Marquis of Bemminster, was distant, but there always existed a kindly feeling between them. When Theresa married one of her father's curates, the Reverend Francis Lauder, Lord Bemminster sent her a cheque for a considerable sum, enclosed in a very characteristic letter of congratulation. Poor Theresa's happiness was of short duration ; the failure of a bank, the death of her father, and finally the loss of her husband, all within three years, deprived her of everything she possessed except her baby, little Helena, then two years old. Theresa endeavoured to procure employment of some kind, but the charge of her child made this almost impossible to find. Then she wrote to Lord Bemminster, and begged him to help her in obtaining work.

'I fear I am not accomplished enough to gain my living by teaching, but I am very willing to do anything that will not part me from my child. I think that I may safely undertake any household work or household management. I should like to be a housekeeper. My dear father always used to say a gentlewoman should never be ashamed of any honest work. I do not care what the work is so long as I feel I am competent to undertake it, and that it would not part me from my baby.'

Lord Bemminster was pleased with the letter ; it was

simple and frank, and showed good breeding. He thought at first of offering her a small annuity for life, but on second thoughts the shrewd kindly old man changed his mind. 'No,' he said, 'the money will be twice as welcome to her if she feels she has earned it.' He bethought himself of his large country seat in the south of England, Scholefield Park, where he never lived. It so happened that a housekeeper was required there. It was a post of trust, for the house was full of valuable pictures; and as Lord Bemminster rarely spent more than a week there in the year, a great deal of the management of local charities was placed in the housekeeper's hands. In a few weeks Theresa Lauder was established as lady-housekeeper at Scholefield. Her education, like that of many daughters of country clergymen, had been of a very practical nature. She was active, and liked her work. She was far too well-bred to be a fine lady. It was a quiet but a busy contented life. Helena grew up in the beautiful old place, and learned to love it as the real owners never had done.

Lord Bemminster seldom came to Scholefield. Once or twice his sons came there for a few weeks with a reading party. Little Helena used then to slip in every morning to the long picture-gallery, and have a game with idle, good-natured Lord Danebury. the eldest son. But the younger of the two brothers, Eugene, was the child's favourite, although, or perhaps because, he paid her little attention. He was utterly unlike his fair-haired, broad-shouldered brother. Eugene was small and very dark, with a sallow complexion and large deep-set eyes. There was an indefinable air of melancholy in his face that always attracted the child. He was very silent and gentle, with scholarly tastes. He had been lame ever since his childhood, and could not take any active exercise. There was one of those curious family likenesses in feature between him and Helena. But there was this difference: the girl grew straight and tall, and instead of the look of melancholy she had a calm sweet expression.

When Helena was fourteen years old news came to Scholefield of Lord Eugene's marriage with Lady Wilhelmina Daubeny, and a few weeks after the wedding Lord Eugene and Lady Wilhelmina Ashleigh paid a visit to Scholefield. There were triumphal arches raised in their honour, and all the school-children, led by the choir-master, came forward to meet them, and sang them a welcome. It was late on a fine May evening, and almost dark, but Chinese lanterns glittered among the trees and shrubs, and there was a light in every window of the old house. In the hall, Mrs. Lauder and Helena, with all the servants arranged in a long line on either side, stood waiting to greet the young couple.

The carriage stopped. Helena heard Eugene's clear vibrating voice thanking the school-children, in a few simple kindly words, for their welcome. Then he and Lady Wilhelmina entered the house, and every eye was fixed upon her. She was very tiny, the prettiest, daintiest figure imaginable. Her features were delicate and lovely in the extreme, the complexion dazzling, and the eyes a rich bright hazel, but with an insolent expression that never left them. Her hair was abundant, but it was (then) of an unnatural pale straw colour, dressed according to the latest and most exaggerated fashion. Her dress was Parisian ; the mixture of colours in it was one of those which have always been supposed by English taste to be discordant. She carried a sleepy little dog in her arms, and she looked, as she came tripping on the highest of high heels, like a lovely but malevolent fairy.

She walked up to Mrs. Lauder. 'I'm tired to death, and my precious Toto is bored to tears. For mercy's sake show me my room ! ' she said, with a yawn.

'Wilhelmina, this is my cousin, Mrs. Lauder ! ' cried her husband, hastily.

'I'm very sorry, I'm sure,' she returned, affectedly, 'if I've made any mistake ; but whoever it is, I shall be deeply obliged if she will show me, or tell someone—the house-

keeper or the cook-maid, I don't care which—to show me my room.'

Mrs. Lauder caught a look of entreaty from Eugene, and, feeling heartily sorry for him, she hurriedly led the way to Lady Wilhelmina's rooms. Then she returned to the hall, and with a few kind words she dismissed the disappointed people who had come to do honour to the newly-married pair. Helena was awaiting her in their sitting-room.

'Mother, how hateful Lady Wilhelmina is!' she cried. She would not even allow that Lady Wilhelmina was pretty. 'I think,' she said, 'that she has a horrid face!'

On the following morning Lady Wilhelmina was in a more gracious humour. She sent at eleven o'clock for Helena to come to her. Helena found her in the dining-room, dressed in bright pink and pale blue, with touches here and there of bronze-green, finishing her breakfast. Toto was lapping up cream out of a saucer by her side; he had his fat short neck and curly tail tied up with ribbons that matched his mistress's dress. He was a proud, disagreeable little dog, surly to poor people, constantly sick in society, and with a habit, that the housemaids hated, of rolling himself when wet and dirty on the best sofas and ottomans.

'You know, Eugene,' she was saying, in her high-pitched drawling voice, 'I hate ugly children, and Toto always bites them; but if she's pretty she may as well show me about the place. Come here, Nell, or whatever your name is,' she went on, as the child entered. 'Helena is it? Ah, that's too long for me. Life isn't long enough, my dear, for such names. You may as well show me over the house, and round the garden and grounds. Come along!' and she sprang up and whirled round the room, singing in a clear shrill soprano an air from an Italian opera. The quick motion brought the bright colour to her cheeks. There was something indescribably graceful in the tiny figure. Eugene watched her with loving and admiring eyes. He was under a spell. Everyone else saw in her 'a worldly, capricious little vixen,' as Lord Danebury

expressed it, 'who had married him for his money'; 'an ill-conditioned, ill-bred girl,' as his old aunt, Lord Bemminster's sister, described her.

'You are wasting all your time, Willie!' he said, affectionately. 'Come, Helena! will you show her everything that is worth seeing? no one knows the place better than you do,' he added kindly.. His pleasant words and smile won over Helena, who had stood aloof, burning with indignation at Lady Wilhelmina's manner to her. The child silently led the way through the long picture-gallery and the deserted drawing-rooms, divested for the time being of their brown holland coverings. Lady Wilhelmina criticised everything, pulled everything about, laughed at her own jokes, and patronised Helena to her heart's content. They passed to the gardens.

'That arbour is hideous! This walk is perfectly beastly!' said the bride.

Helena grew scarlet.

'It's all very beautiful,' she said, angrily.

'Ah! so you think, you little ninny!' returned her companion, with a laugh. 'I suppose you have never seen any other place in your life?'

'I don't want to see any other place,' cried the child. 'Scholefield is the best place and the loveliest in the world.'

Lady Wilhelmina paid no heed. She was amusing herself by turning on a fountain, which presently squirted water at Helena and wetted the child's clean print and garden hat. Lady Wilhelmina laughed.

When they returned to the house they found Lord Eugene and Toto awaiting them on the doorstep.

'Well, Willie, how do you like the dear old place?' he cried. 'I know your guide has shown you all that is worth seeing.'

'Oh, the place is well enough in itself,' returned his wife; 'it's the arrangement and the decorations that are simply beastly! You and I shall have a lot to alter one of these fine days.'

Scholefield was to be Eugene's at his father's death ; it had been his mother's property.

He winced at her words.

'I am very fond of the place as it is,' he said gravely. Then, when Helena left them, he added, 'Couldn't you try to care for it a little for my sake, dear ?'

But Lady Wilhelmina had picked up Toto, and in spite of his snarling was covering him with kisses. When she saw that his dirty paws had left a mark on her bright-coloured gown, she flung him down at the risk of breaking his poor little paws, and drove him away with a smart slap and a kick from her little foot. You would hardly have thought so fairy-like a hand and foot could slap and kick to so much purpose. Toto fled howling, and Eugene looked displeased.

Mrs. Lauder was heartily glad when the visit to Scholefield came to an end. Eugene was always considerate, but his wife had a thousand caprices and whims. She was always complaining of the rooms and the furniture, abusing the cooking and the servants. She gave an extraordinary amount of trouble, and never thanked anyone. Indeed, she seemed to take an ill-natured delight in making those about her uncomfortable. The servants were no sooner settled at their meals than her bell began to ring. Twice she called up the household in the middle of the night, because, she said, Toto wanted his hot-water bottle refilled.

Mrs. Lauder pitied Eugene from the bottom of her heart. It was impossible, she felt, that he should not find out his mistake soon ; indeed, there were already many moments when he must have cruel doubts. When, a year later, Mrs. Lauder heard that Lady Wilhelmina had a son, she hoped that the new duties and new affection might soften and steady her. But Lady Wilhelmina had no heart with which she could feel affection ; her case was a very hopeless one ; there were no better instincts in her to which anybody could appeal. There came stories to Scholefield of her neglect of the child, of the ever-increasing unhappiness of Eugene's

married life; and then came the time when the newspapers were full of the story of disgrace brought by her to the good old name. In the midst of all the misery and the shame there came the news of her death, from a fall out hunting. Eugene went abroad to try and distract his thoughts by travelling, but before he went he wrote to Mrs. Lauder, asking her whether she would accept the charge of his child during his absence.

'His nurse,' he wrote, 'is a very good trustworthy person, but I shall feel happier about him if he is with you. My father is too old and too feeble to be burdened with the responsibility; it is he who has proposed this plan. You see we never hesitate to come to you when we want help, knowing that your kindness is unwearied.'

He insisted on putting into her hands a large sum of money for her own use, in addition to the monthly sum for the child's expenses, which was to be paid her by the estate agent. 'You have no right to refuse it, for Helena's sake,' he wrote.

Mrs. Lauder gladly welcomed the little boy and his nurse when they arrived a few weeks later. The nurse was an old family servant, devoted to Eugene. She brought the tears to Theresa's eyes when she described the parting between him and little Joscelyn.

'He kissed the dear child again and again, and came back and back to say good-bye. You know my lord's eyes, ma'am, how sad they always did look—I couldn't bear the sight of them then; they made my heart ache.'

Joscelyn was a delicate child, small and puny for his age; his eyes, dark and wistful like those of his father, seemed too big for his thin white face. He was always ailing and fretful. But from the very first he took a fancy to Helena, and never was so happy as when he was with her. Helena had grown up tall and strong. Her beauty was of a homely placid kind. Hers was a face which perhaps might not strike you when you first met her; but you grew to love it when you lived with her, and you fancied none other was so

beautiful. The shape of her face was a very pure oval, the complexion of a creamy tint, the eyes large and dark, the smooth hair parted on a pure white brow, the mouth a very serious one. The expression was serene and sweet, her figure willowy and graceful. There was something very virginal in her beauty.

The time passed peacefully at Scholefield. Little Joscelyn's suffering life was made as happy as might be. Helena loved the child devotedly. She was now about eighteen, and the child three years old. In spite of all the care lavished upon him he seemed to lose strength rather than to gain it. There was a long cold winter, which kept him indoors; then there came bitter March winds. Helena used to come in from the bright cold world outside, with her hands full of violets and silky palm, to find her darling sitting, wan and listless, on his little three-legged stool by the nursery fire, his toys strewn round him. His feeble cough went to her heart.

'Mother,' she said one day, 'we ought to send for Lord Eugene. I am sure Joscelyn is not getting on. Dr. Farmer can see no improvement. I am sure the child grows whiter and thinner every week.'

So one brilliant spring day Eugene returned to Scholefield. He had travelled with as much haste as possible upon receiving Mrs. Lauder's letter. The two years' absence had changed him; he was bronzed by the sun, and looked stronger. Mrs. Lauder met him at the door.

'Joscelyn is about the same,' she said. 'Will you come upstairs and see him?'

Eugene followed her to the nursery. The child was lying on a sofa, looking languidly at a picture-book that Helena was showing him. He put up his little face obediently to be kissed by his father when Mrs. Lauder told him to do so; then he lay back again listlessly on the cushions.

'My darling, father has brought you back some toys,' Eugene said tenderly.

The little face brightened for a moment. The nurse went downstairs to beg the servants to bring up the presents. There was a big portmanteau full of them—toys, curiosities, many-coloured wraps, Turkish shoes, Indian beads. Wherever Eugene had wandered he had remembered his little boy. The nursery looked like an oriental bazaar.

The days passed by and Joscelyn grew weaker. The loving watchers by his little cot did not acknowledge to each other the change that every week brought. The difference was very slight, but it was real. Bit by bit the child gave up his daily run on fine days in the sunny garden ; then the drives tired him ; then he was carried down into the warm morning room that faced south ; and then came a time when he was too weak to stir from his nursery.

'He'll never climb May hill,' said his nurse. It seemed to Helena that it would break her heart to lose him. She never left him except when the doctor or her mother literally forced her to take air and exercise or rest. She had a strange fancy that her presence might avert the evil. It was, once more, the old contest between Love and Death.

It hurt Helena to see the coldness and indifference with which Eugene treated her. She always had a vague impression that he was dissatisfied with her. She could not help fancying, nevertheless, that he watched her, but it seemed to her he only spied out her faults. The troubles and bitter disappointment of his married life appeared to have made him suspicious and harsh in his judgment. He was very ceremonious with her. He always called her Miss Lauder, never Helena, as in old days. He would not allow her to do anything for him. Once he found that she had walked to the village to procure for him some foreign postcards which he happened to need, and he seemed almost vexed with her. He thanked her politely, but begged her in future not to take so much trouble.

'I should certainly have sent my servant had I known,' he said. 'The postcards were of no consequence, and I am

sorry to think you should have troubled yourself about them.'

One night, when Helena was going to sit up with the child, Lord Eugene came into the nursery. The room was lighted only by a faintly flickering fire and a dim night-light. Helena was sitting, her hands folded and her eyes dreamily fixed on the glowing coals, by the little white cot where the child was sleeping.

'Pray go to bed,' Eugene whispered. 'I am quite able to undertake the watching to-night.'

His look belied his words. His eyes were hollow with want of sleep, and there were deep black lines under them.

'No—please, *please* let me sit up,' pleaded Helena.

He gazed at her searchingly.

'You are very good,' he said slowly, almost severely, 'to do so much for a child who is only a distant relation. It is a duty you have chosen to elect for yourself.'

Helena was deeply wounded.

'It may not be my business, as you say,' she rejoined, as the warm colour rose in her cheeks, 'but I love the child better than anyone in the world except my mother.'

He turned away, and when after a few minutes Helena again saw his face, she noticed that the dark sad eyes were full of tears. Her heart smote her ; no doubt it was sorrow and anxiety that made him so hard on her.

'You won't mind my doing things for Joscelyn,' she said gently, 'because he likes having me near him ; and you cannot know, Lord Eugene, what a pleasure it is for me to do anything I can for him.'

Eugene muttered something that she could not catch, and then, after a pause, 'Thank you. Good night.'

The end was not far distant. The little child slept himself away one night in May, just as the dawn was breaking. The birds were beginning to chirp and twitter in the boughs of the great sycamore close to the nursery windows. There was a dewy freshness in the air, a chill sense of change

without. The little boy sighed once, and turned; his father took one of the tiny hands in his and pressed it gently. Then the child slipped back upon his pillow, and all was quiet, except for the slow regular ticking of the nursery clock.

'I think—I think,' said Eugene, 'he has done with pain and suffering now.'

The last time Eugene saw his little son—'on this side'—the child was lying crowned and surrounded by lilies of the valley, and fresh branches of white lilac and hawthorn. The little hands were folded on the tiny breast, and there was a very sweet smile on the baby face. Joscelyn had always looked, in life, old before his time, and weary; now, for the first time, he had found his childhood. Helena was by the coffin, adding the last few sprays of narcissus to a garland that lay at the child's feet. She tried to leave the room, but Eugene stopped her.

'Don't go,' he said; 'you loved him as I did.'

He stooped down and kissed the little cold forehead.

'Good-bye, my dear, good-bye. God knows I could not wish you back!'

The large burning tears fell from Helena's eyes on the flowers in her hands. There rose in her a storm of compassion and tenderness for this suffering, for the pain of this parting, for the 'pity of it all.' He gave one last look at the little face set in its frame of white flowers, and left the room.

The little coffin was carried down the old oak stairs, and through the sunshine and the shadow of the tender spring green in the park, to the quiet churchyard. There was a great elder-bush by the wall in a sunny corner, where the birds used to chirp and play all day, and there the little boy was buried. Eugene had arranged to leave Scholefield the same day by the evening train. He came to say good-bye to Mrs. Lauder.

'Shall I say good-bye to Helena for you?' she asked. 'She has gone out into the grounds for a little.'

Eugene said that he would look for her himself. He wandered through the garden and the shrubberies, and could not find her. It then occurred to him to search for her in a part of the park called the Desert. It was a wild broken piece of ground, dotted here and there with old hawthorns and gnarled maples. As he approached this spot he saw her leaning against the trunk of a thorn. The tall willowy figure, clad in deep mourning, was set in a background of snowy flowering branches. She had taken off her hat, and some of the blossoms, loosened by the gentle evening breeze, had fallen on her soft hair and into the folds of her dress. She started at his footstep, and her eyes met his. There was something unwonted in his expression which troubled her—she could not tell why. He put out his hand and said, 'I am come to say good-bye, Helena.'

The large dark eyes looked very kindly at her, so kindly that she could not face them, and so looked away from him, down on the fresh green grass.

'I cannot thank you as I ought,' he went on. 'I can only say, "God bless you, Helena, for your kindness to my darling." . . . Until I came to Scholefield, and saw you with him, I thought all the sweetness of life was over for me, and even then I could hardly believe it possible that there could be anything in store for me except bitterness and disappointment. I have nothing to offer you in return. I used to think, if the child had lived, the care of him would have been an inducement to you. Now he is gone. But if you could spare me some of the love you gave him, I would do my best, dear, to make you happy. You have taught me to believe in life again—to think that it may not, after all, be only a delusion and a miserable deception.'

And as Helena listened, and understood, there arose in her fresh loving young heart that exquisitely tender pity which is so near akin to love that it can scarcely be distinguished from it. The thought of Eugene's suffering seemed to wound her past all other pain, and in that one moment her whole heart went out to him.

So the two lingered under the sweet almond-scented hawthorns, while the deep evening shadows and the soft river mists came up slowly over the churchyard in the valley, and covered the elder-bush, and the newly-made grave of the little child they had loved.

ALMERIA'S PRIDE.

A RICKETY fly, with an old white horse, was slowly creeping down the hilly road of Harbury Chase one misty February morning. The trees were dripping with wet, and there were great swathes of shroud-like fog in the valley. When the fly came to the lower lodge the driver paused to take off the drag, and the occupant of the carriage leant out of the window for a last look at the Chase, with its rough picturesque ground and old oaks and hawthorns. It was a handsome face that looked out; a girlish beauty that promised to be still more striking in the years to come when the angles should be rounded, and a certain air of hardness, both in feature and in expression, should give place to a riper, softer loveliness. But at that moment there were tears in Almeria Harbury's beautiful hawk-like eyes, and the girl's clear-cut lips trembled as she looked at the dear old home which was hers no longer. Then she caught the fly-driver surveying her with that fixed bovine gaze which belongs to country folk, and she drew herself up, crimson with shame and indignation, at being seen crying. The man climbed slowly upon his box, and the fly rumbled away for a mile or more, until it stopped before a neat little lodge. When admitted within the iron gate, it crawled on a few more yards along a gravel sweep and round a grass plot to the hall door of a fair-sized stone house.

There was no need to ring the bell. The door opened at once, and an old manservant came forward to help

Almeria out of the carriage, and an elderly lady, in a black silk gown, and with her white cap slipping on one side, greeted her warmly from the hall.

'My dear, do come in. You must be perished with cold this damp day. Samuel! Perhaps Tozer'—Tozer was the flyman—'would like some refreshment after his drive. Almeria, my dear, I am very glad to see you. Samuel! Please bring Miss Harbury a cup of hot coffee to the drawing-room. Almeria, my dear, it will warm you after your long cold drive.'

'Thank you, Mrs. Vanbrugh; but it wasn't a long drive, and I really am not cold.'

Almeria's manner was always decided. Some people thought her ungracious. But Mrs. Vanbrugh always thought the best of everybody. She was an elderly lady, with a kindly, plain face. Her garments were always trailing—'such sloppety clothes' ill-natured people called them—and her cap was always on one side. There was a perpetual smell of dinner—past, present, and future—pervading her house. It did not matter at what hour you came, you always smelt it. The rooms were small, and very hot. Mrs. Vanbrugh always had the toothache. It seemed chronic; but she bore it very uncomplainingly. It was a very gentle, dull, stuffy life that she led. Her only dissipations were an occasional drive in Tozer's close fly, and four dinner-parties which she gave in the course of every year to her neighbours. But she was so hospitable that her spare room was always occupied by some friend or relation. So when Mr. Harbury of Harbury Chase died, leaving the property in such a condition that his nephew and heir, Cospatrick Harbury, was forced to sell the fine old place, and seek his fortune in Australia as a sheep-farmer, it seemed natural enough that Mrs. Vanbrugh should invite Almeria, Cospatrick's only sister, to spend with her the year that must elapse before the new home in Australia was ready to receive her.

Almeria did not shrink from the idea of probable hard-

ship in Australia. Indeed, she rather enjoyed the prospect of the wild, rough, lonely life with the brother to whom she was passionately devoted. But she felt keenly leaving Harbury Chase. She was intensely proud—proud of her name and ancestors, proud of the position her family had from time immemorial held in the county. Now that they were to be 'ousted from what had been their home for eight hundred years by an upstart manufacturer,' as she described the purchaser of Harbury, life would be unbearable in England. Nevertheless it was a sore trial to leave the dear old home, and it was no wonder that she became bitter when she thought of the changes this manufacturer would probably make. 'But what can you expect from such people?' she said with scorn; '"parvenus" are proverbially vulgar in their taste!'

She was so much prejudiced against the new owner of Harbury, Mr. James, that the kindness and consideration displayed in the letter he wrote, begging her to stay on as long as she found it convenient, did not disarm her. She had, moreover, that overweening, unreasoning pride of birth and station which, even in these days of transition and change, lingers on in some old county families in remote parts of England. So she sent a stiff note in reply, in which she informed Mr. James, with her compliments, that she had already made all her arrangements, and preferred to leave Harbury Chase immediately.

'It would have been different,' she said to Mrs. Vanbrugh, 'if he had been a gentleman!'

One lovely April day Mrs. Vanbrugh announced that she had ordered Tozer's fly to take Almeria and herself for a drive.

'My dear,' she said kindly, 'I think you want a little distraction. So let us go for a pretty drive in the fly, and call on Lady Berry. They have just come back from Rome, and you would enjoy seeing your young friend.'

Almeria assented, and Mrs. Vanbrugh went on—

'I thought we would go by the upper road, through the Chase. Mr. James is not expected until Friday, so that there will be no chance of our meeting him.'

There was a public right of way through the Chase by the upper road.

'Oh, certainly, Mrs. Vanbrugh,' answered Almeria. 'I shall be very glad to drive along the dear old road as long as there is no chance of meeting that man.'

Lady Berry was the nearest of the Harbury neighbours, and her eldest daughter Sybil was Almeria's greatest friend. It was with more than usual warmth that Sybil received Almeria upon this occasion.

'It is so good of Mrs. Vanbrugh to bring you to see us directly we have returned,' she said. 'Mother and I both want you to come and stay with us when we come back from London at the end of July. It's a long time to look forward to, but we are going to have people off and on then. Oh, you don't know how I shall miss you when you go out to Australia! . . . That horrid Mr. James is coming over here to luncheon on Friday. I suppose we shall have to know him. Father says he is quite a gentleman.'

'Quite a gentleman!' repeated Almeria disdainfully. 'You can't expect a man of that sort to be a gentleman. A self-made man!'

'Well, he behaves like everybody else, and is quite presentable. I suppose father meant that.'

'That,' said Almeria, laying down the law, as indeed she often did, 'is quite as much as anybody could expect of him. His father was a butcher, or a baker, or a candlestick-maker.'

'My dear Alma, you think so much of birth. But nowadays, society has grown so large,' cried Sybil, 'that one meets all kinds of persons everywhere—in London especially—and you wouldn't know the difference.'

'Then,' rejoined Almeria, '*I* think it is a great pity. I have never had a season in London, but I certainly never wish to, if these are the kind of people you associate with,

manufacturers and what not. They can't be ladies and gentlemen. There is only one way to be a gentleman—to be born it!'

'My dear Almeria, I quite agree,' said Lady Berry gently, 'but surely a man may be born one of nature's gentlemen without possessing sixteen quarterings. I am constantly surprised at the ill-breeding I meet with in persons of undoubted birth and family. To my mind it depends more upon a man's disposition whether he be a gentleman than upon anything else.'

Almeria coloured with vexation. 'Surely you would not call Mr. James a gentleman?' she asked.

'I shall wait to form my opinion, my dear child, until I have met him,' Lady Berry replied. 'It is, however, impossible that I should ever care for him as a neighbour as I cared for you and Cospatrick, and I can well understand you find it very hard to see a stranger in your dear uncle's place.'

'It isn't only that, indeed, Lady Berry. It is a principle that is at stake,' persisted Almeria. 'It would have been quite different if Mr. James had been born and bred a gentleman; but what business has a man like he is to own Harbury Chase? I cannot bear that class distinctions should be so entirely forgotten. Let these manufacturers and shopkeepers consort together with their kind, while we keep to the society of our equals.'

'My dear Alma, what a dull and narrow world you would live in!' retorted Sybil, laughing; and the entrance of tea put a stop to the discussion.

When Mrs. Vanbrugh and Almeria, on their homeward drive, reached the Chase, Almeria begged that she might be set down to walk the rest of the way home.

'I should enjoy it,' she said; and there is no chance of my meeting that man.'

The fresh spring wind cooled her hot cheeks, and the familiar scene brought old thoughts and recollections to her mind. A longing came over her to walk once more through

the beloved shrubbery and garden. No one would see her, except perhaps the old gardener, whom Mr. James had retained. It would be a melancholy pleasure—but yet a pleasure—to revisit the well-known places.

'The apple espaliers must be in blossom; and that border of yellow alyssum and dark polyanthus. I wonder if the crown imperial is in flower, and the little grape hyacinths that come up in the box edging,' she said to herself. She wandered through the garden; all unchanged it was as yet. She pulled down a bough of budding lilac to catch that faint smell which lurks even in the tightly closed buds; she touched the tender spray with her lips, and the tears sprang to her eyes. Then she heard a noise, the opening of the garden door close beside her, and she saw a man standing on the threshold. She blushed crimson with shame and anger. It must be Mr. James—a thickset man of middle height, with a coarse red face! He seemed embarrassed, and uncertain whether to advance or retire. But he quickly made up his mind, and he came to meet her, taking off his hat with a pleasant smile that lit up the plain features. 'I beg your pardon,' he said; and his voice was very gentle, and well modulated. 'Pray do not let me disturb you. I have arrived a day or two earlier than I had intended, but please do not let me drive you away.'

'Thank you,' returned Almeria, stiffly, 'I ought to be going home.'

And as she spoke she stepped hurriedly towards the door. But a sweetbriar had caught her dress, and in an instant tore a great rent in the stuff. Almeria could have cried with vexation. She was obliged to accept help from the enemy. To do him justice he was not officious. He disentangled the gown, and then proposed that she should let his housekeeper mend or pin it together, as in its present condition it would certainly trip her up. She unwillingly consented. He led the way through the familiar passages to the housekeeper's room, but paused first at the library door.

'There are,' he said diffidently, 'some little things here

that are of no value to me, and may, I think, be of some value to you. They are really only in my way here, and it would be a kindness if you would take them away. Will you come into the library and see for yourself?'

Mr. James had put on a little table a number of small articles that Almeria had longed to carry off with her when she left the Chase, but which she had been obliged to leave so that they might be sold with the rest. Among other things there was a beautiful miniature of her great-grandmother which she greatly prized, because she fancied it resembled Cospatrick, but it had been considered too valuable for her to take away as a mere recollection. How could Mr. James have known that these things were exactly those she had most desired? She was surprised, almost touched, by his kindness, but she answered stiffly that she could not deprive him of so many things; perhaps, she added, he did not know that the miniature was a Cosway, and therefore valuable as a work of art?

'Yes,' he said, deprecatingly, 'I know that—for I once made a collection of miniatures; but I have already several Cosways, and I really shouldn't know what to do with this one. I have more pictures than I have space, and should be very glad to get rid of it, and of the other things on this table.' And he smiled so kindly that Almeria was struck by the way in which his plain features were redeemed by his expression.

She accepted the things in a half-hearted, chilly way; but as she walked home, after having her gown duly mended, her conscience reproached her for her ungraciousness. Yet when Mrs. Wilson, the vicar's wife, called upon Mrs. Vanbrugh a few days later, she did not find in Almeria any response to her praises of Mr. James.

'Really, my dear Almeria,' Mrs. Wilson was saying, 'do you know, I think you have much to be thankful for! Instead of being a horrid vulgar man and wanting to spoil the dear old place, Mr. James is a refined, cultivated man, of excellent taste. So anxious to spare your and Cospatrick's

feelings too. And so good to the poor people; they seem to be his chief thought.'

It would, perhaps, be too much to say that Almeria had hoped the new squire would be hard, or even neglectful to the poor, but it did not please her to think of him as possessing any virtues.

'He certainly is plain,' Mrs. Wilson went on; 'but when he begins to talk you forget all about that. And his old servants can't say enough for him; his old housekeeper has been with him for the last ten years, and she says it was wonderful the way in which he nursed his mother through her last illness—more like a woman for gentleness than a man.'

'It is indeed a blessing,' put in Mrs. Vanbrugh, cautiously, 'that he seems unlike what Almeria feared he would be.'

One day Almeria was walking slowly and thoughtfully along the highway that skirted the wall of the Chase. It was a bright May morning. The birds were singing everywhere, and the air was full of the aromatic and resinous smell of the trees bursting into leaf and blossom. There was a wood on the other side of the wall and a green ride that ran parallel with the high road for half a mile or more. Presently Almeria heard a footstep on the dead leaves and broken wood that, as she knew, strewed the ride. She could neither see nor be seen, but she could hear everything distinctly. The passer-by—whoever he might be—began to sing. It was a beautiful tenor voice, very well trained and sympathetic—a voice that brought the tears to your eyes. Suddenly the singer stopped; evidently he had met someone.

'That's a heavy load you are carrying,' he said. And Almeria now recognised Mr. James's voice. Then it was he who had been singing!

A weak cracked voice—the voice of an old woman—answered:

'T'es, zur, t'es. But I be bound to carry mun to thicky

gate, where my little maidens meet me coming home dinner-times.'

'Here—give the faggot to me. I'll carry it to the gate for you.'

'Bless my heart, zur, I couldn't never!'

'To be sure you can! Give it to me. Come! There—that's right.'

And then Almeria heard the rustling of the sticks as Mr. James shifted the faggot to his own shoulders, and the footsteps grew fainter and fainter, until they died away in the wood.

One day, when Almeria was just starting for a solitary walk, Mrs. Wilson arrived at Mrs. Vanbrugh's house. There was something peculiar in Mrs. Wilson's manner, and an agitated expression on her face that struck Almeria at once.

'My dear,' she began, 'I must see you alone. An important matter—of course you will clear up the difficulty. Very tiresome misunderstanding—though no doubt—in short——' Mrs. Wilson rambled on in broken sentences, while Almeria looked at her wondering.

'Will you walk down the road with me,' said Almeria, 'and please tell me what it is you mean? We shall be undisturbed there. I prefer hearing everything in the plainest way.'

The girl's manner overawed the kind, fussy little woman. They walked down the road in silence, Almeria with a sense of coming evil, Mrs. Wilson trying to gulp down a sob. Then suddenly the vicar's wife began:

'My dear—you mustn't think I could suspect Cospatrick of anything dishonourable—but there is a mistake. No one knows anything except Mr. James and the vicar and myself. Cospatrick sold to Mr. James the right of shooting over the osier beds and over that outlying farm of Frenche's. But it wasn't his to sell. Don't you remember your poor dear uncle parting with the right, and how vexed Cospatrick was at the time? Your poor uncle sold the right to Sir

Walter Berry, but I fancy he never had the lawyer's part of the work properly done. So, legally, it wasn't binding—but—but——'

Mrs. Wilson broke off with a sob.

The burning colour rushed to Almeria's face. She remembered it all perfectly. But she knew to her shame it could have been no mistake. Cospatrick must have known; it was an old and repeated complaint that his uncle had parted with the wild-duck shooting, and she knew at the time of the sale of Harbury Chase Cospatrick had said to her something about 'getting the better of that beastly manufacturer over the shooting!' She had paid no heed to it at the time; but she was conscious, although she would never own it to herself, that Cospatrick's standard was not a high one, and his sense of honour very different from hers.

'Do you know what Mr. James gave for the right of shooting over the osier beds and the out-lying farm?' she asked. Her own voice seemed to her to come from a long way off. She felt giddy with the overwhelming sense of disgrace, yet she remained erect, stiff, and proudly resenting Mrs. Wilson's sympathy.

'Some hundreds—not a *very* great sum. I think about three or four hundred,' Mrs. Wilson answered, considerately turning her eyes away from the girl. 'And now, my dear Almeria, you must never tell Mr. James I told you—for I promised I wouldn't; but—it was very wrong I know—when he was gone, I thought you might set it all straight, so I came to you.'

Then Mr. James must have known there could be no exonerating explanation possible, or he would not have forbidden Mrs. Wilson to mention the matter to her! Almeria felt as though she had drunk the cup of degradation to the dregs.

'It shall be put straight at once,' the proud girl said. 'Of course the money will be refunded. Thank you for telling me. It shall be seen to.'

She left Mrs. Wilson and crept back mechanically to

the house to consider what had better be done. She resolved to see Mr. James at once. Almeria had a little sum of money—a few hundreds—of her own. These she would offer to Mr. James. She walked slowly to the Chase, painfully going over in her mind what she would say to Mr. James. But when she was shown, very pale, but stiffly erect, and looking defiantly before her, into the library where Mr. James was sitting, all her words and formulas seemed to desert her. How she explained herself she never knew; she only had a confused recollection of what passed. But this she distinctly knew, that Mr. James had been very, very kind to her—so kind that her pride for the first time in her life broke down. He gently refused to take her money: a few lines to her brother would set everything straight, he said, and there was no hurry at all about the matter. His manner was very firm, and she dared not press her point. Then he changed the subject, and spoke of the garden and the roses. Would she not like to gather a bunch to take back with her? And she followed him into the garden; and all the while the burning tears were welling up in her beautiful dark eyes.

He saw her tears; and that perhaps was the reason that his manner became yet gentler—almost tender and caressing—to her. She felt that his courtesy sprang from his heart. This then was the man whom she had declared to be no gentleman. And Cospatrick, a Harbury, the descendant of the family who for thirty generations had owned the Chase, had proved himself dishonourable. It seemed like some terrible dream.

August came, and with it the return of the Berrys. 'Do come and spend a week with us,' wrote Sybil, 'we hope to have some pleasant people. I am afraid Archy has asked Mr. James to come for three or four days—but you needn't be afraid he will trouble you. I hear that Lady Oxenham wants him for Dot—and the Oxenhams are coming here that week. Dot gets on capitally with him. You know what a fascinating little flirt she is. I think

they would suit admirably. He is so silent and she so full of chatter.'

Then there happened to Almeria one of those things which surprise us so much in life. She suddenly came round a corner, as it were, and stumbled upon a very unwelcome fact. She found herself thoroughly annoyed at the idea of Mr. James's caring for Dot Oxenham. Then with a sudden flash of perception it occurred to her, that daily, almost hourly, she had gone over in her mind that painful scene when she spoke to Mr. James about Cospatrick's dishonourable act, and that, incomprehensible as it seemed, the pain was fraught with an indescribable sweetness. Mr. James, she confessed to herself, was the best man, the truest gentleman she had ever known, and the distinctions—the barriers that had seemed so insuperable—faded away into space. The girl's pride had suffered cruelly. There had come in those weeks of anguish that followed her discovery of Cospatrick's dishonesty, a very sad, humbled look into the proud dark eyes. The tall, erect figure seemed to droop under the weight of some burden.

She accepted the invitation to the Berrys, and arrived there one lovely summer day when the whole party was assembled under the great lime trees, drinking tea. Dot Oxenham, a provokingly pretty little person, dressed in the most becoming blue muslin, covered with a pattern of daisies and silvery grasses, had brought her banjo out and was singing. The song came to an end as Almeria joined the company, and after the usual greetings were over Mr. James, who had been seated on the grass beside Dot, rose and came to help Lady Berry to dispense tea and bread-and-butter. Then he leant against the trunk of one of the limes, watching the girl as she tuned her banjo and made preparations for another song. The soft light flickered through the leaves, and made a little spot of brightness just where Dot sat, gilding her fair curly hair. The blue ribbon at her throat made her eyes look doubly blue. She had taken off her picturesque shady hat, which was a work of art in

cunning combinations—apparently so simple—of lace and daisies and forget-me-nots. Almeria in her hot black frock —she had no money to spare now for new dresses—felt very grim and unattractive by the side of the graceful girl in her becoming gown. Yet, had she known Mr. James's thoughts, she need have feared no comparison. That evening Mr. James took Dot in to dinner, and she talked to him incessantly. Almeria fancied that sometimes his eyes seemed to wander and his attention to flag, but he certainly had an indulgent kindly manner with the pretty silly child that justified Sybil in saying to Almeria, as the ladies left the dining-room : 'I think he admires Dot, and I'm sure she is thinking of him. Isn't it thrilling? Fancy, if he proposes in this house, she will have to ask me to be a bridesmaid!'

Almeria coloured, and walked away to the other end of the drawing-room, where Lady Berry was sitting. Presently the gentlemen came in. Mr. James wandered a little about the room, and finally joined Lady Berry and Almeria. He talked chiefly to Lady Berry, and yet, all the while Almeria felt—at the back of her head—that all he said was meant for her. It was a very interesting conversation, touching on many subjects, never superficial, but always going to the root of things. But just when it seemed to Almeria that they had reached the most interesting point—just as Mr. James was beginning to speak of some personal experiences —Lady Berry was called away to help in planning some charades and *tableaux vivants* which were to take place on the following night.

And so the hours and days slipped by, each fresh time of meeting opening more fully to Almeria the golden future beyond, each helping to level the barriers which her pride had raised ; until at last

'Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might ;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.'

A JESUIT PRIEST

It was early in spring ; one of those tender, languid days when, even in London, the air seems full of vague promise and mysterious sweetness. Lady Arwarton drove through Hyde Park, where the sap was rising in the gaunt sooty trees, and the sun opening the yellow cups of the crocuses ; her eyes gazed absently at this and that before her, but they saw nothing but her own misery. She was of that modern type of beautiful Englishwoman, very tall and finely moulded, dark rather than fair, and with features so regular that they might seem insipid, but in her case the face was lit by a peculiar charm of expression, not quick and varying, but sweet and dignified, giving a nobility to all she did or said. The carriage passed out of the park, whence the mass of houses made a soft distance wrapped in a grey-blue veil of smoke, into the brawling streets again, and it stopped in a squalid corner before a little Roman Catholic chapel. Esther Arwarton lifted the heavy curtain and went in. Inside it was very dim and close ; the air heavy with incense—you might almost fancy heavy with prayer. It was a poor little place. The altars were covered with tawdry finery, cheap tinsel, and artificial flowers, and the figures of the saints were coarsely painted in crude bright colours. The music was bad, the voices nasal and sometimes false. Yet the chapel was crowded. There were rich and poor there ; people who came from mere curiosity to hear a popular preacher, and those who belong heart and soul to the old religion. You might almost have known those by their

faces, by the purity and serenity of them, by the inherited steadfast look of a people whose fathers have been faithful unto death, a little minority dwelling among those of an alien creed. Those who hold that saints still walk this earth may find them among the little Roman Catholic communities in England.

There was a breathless silence when the priest ascended into the pulpit. At first sight he seemed made to match his chapel—a little ill-shaped man with common, dull features, a spatulate nose, heavy eyebrows, a large thick mouth, and small eyes of that dingy mixture of dirty green and grey that often does duty for brown. You might pass him in a crowd, or sit next him in an omnibus (he seemed, somehow, suggestive of a crowded omnibus), or see him across a counter weighing out groceries, and there would be nothing in him to make you look twice—unless, perhaps, you caught the expression of the ugly little eyes. They were like some dogs' eyes, very sad and very kind. Nor when he began to speak was there anything in the tone or quality of his voice that suggested an orator; it was rather thick, and sometimes hoarse; and his language was very simple and direct, without scholarship or refinement. But he spoke from his heart burning words: his earnestness was almost a pain. The man, unlettered, evidently from the lower classes, reminded you irresistibly of one of the Disciples of Christ—of St. Peter especially—intensely human, a man who had sinned deeply, but, for all that, an Apostle. He preached in passionate words the renunciation of all things earthly, the surrender to God of heart and soul. The science of life lay in that perfect surrender: to find what was the Divine Will, and to do it; this was to bear Jerusalem in your heart.

Esther listened intently, her hands tightly clasped, her beautiful head bowed. She had staked her all—and had lost it. She had married the only man she had ever cared for, and loved him with all the passion of her strong unchanging heart. He had the subtle charm of an inconstant nature,

the variety, the unexpected turns and moods that irresistibly attract the slow deep natures, the obstinate hearts that could not change if they would. Constancy is not a virtue—it is a temperament. Lord Arwarton was now under the influence of a woman who had neither the beauty nor the intellect, nor even the youth of his wife, a woman who had not heart enough to care two pins for him or for anybody else, but found amusement in exercising her power over him. What is one man's meat is another man's poison: what is one woman's amusement is another woman's pain. Esther's pain was growing—so it seemed to her—unbearable; but no woman knows what she can bear until she has tried. She had been married five years and was childless. She tried to find 'heart's food' among the sick and poor, who, indeed, are not far to seek, and have always their poor struggling hands outstretched, and their hungry, suffering eyes turned towards all and any who will look their way. But her heart was not 'at leisure from itself,' and she realised keenly the truth that one day a navvy's wife spoke to her: 'I've many times tried to feel for others, but I've never felt for others as now I feels for myself.' In such a mood as this, the Jesuit priest's teaching, pitiless as it seemed to those in less desperate case than herself, had a bitter medicine in it that braced her. Roman Catholicism had in itself no attraction for her—she could not give up her Protestant heritage of choosing for herself. But this priest, evidently one who himself 'had been hurt by the archers,' made of such common clay and yet thrilled by so high a purpose, touched her profoundly. And the law of perfect obedience, the great renunciation, the accord with the Will that shapes things and events—all this made a noble creed (whether preached by priest or philosopher) to lift her poor wounded soul out of the squalor of human life, the frets and jars, the perpetual straining after happiness.

During the whole of that summer Esther attended the little chapel. She was not again in London in the autumn, and she spent the winter on the Riviera. There she heard

by chance that the Jesuit preacher had left London. He had received a command from Rome to return there. His congregation petitioned that he might remain with them—he was doing a great work among his people. The answer was, 'Come back at once,' and he had gone forthwith. But Esther heard the news as if in a dream—for the world had changed with her: her husband had turned again to her suddenly with all the tenderness and devotion of their early-married days, and—since neither joys nor sorrows ever come singly in a world where it never rains but it pours—the hope of a child had come to her.

That spring Esther and her husband were in Rome. In looking back in later years upon that time it seemed to Esther that she trod enchanted ground. Out of the haze of happy memories there remained in her mind visions of the great Campagna and the magic purple hills dipped and bathed in the broad sunlight; of a terrace shaded by ilex trees whence you looked down on the shining city framed by the dark boughs; of the little quiet burial-ground overgrown with fragrant violets and overshadowed by cypresses, where Keats and the heart of Shelley rest; of the yellow Tiber spanned by bridges, and with the churches and the palaces rising clear above it against the wide orange sky; and in every picture the keynote of it all, the dome of St. Peter's, sometimes seen blue and fairy-like on the edge of the horizon, across miles of undulating plain, sometimes close at hand, heavy, monstrous, dwarfing everything else into insignificance—but always there, making Rome what it is.

One day Lord and Lady Arwarton drove to the Catacombs, and thence to Cecilia Metella's tomb. As Esther followed the guide through the dim earthy passages she tried to think of the misery, the hunted agony of the human beings who had once trodden these dusky ways. She tried—and failed, for a great flood of happiness like a rising tide washed over her and made sorrow seem an impossibility, an antiquated, long-forgotten thing. The ground about Cecilia Metella's tomb was purple with little scented violets. Lord

Arwarton filled Esther's hands with them ; and as they drove back along the Appian Way, with the sunset transfiguring the city before them, she looked like some beautiful incarnation of joy. As they went through the streets, it occurred to Lord Arwarton that they would pass the door of some church that he wished to visit. The interior seemed strangely dark and chill after the pomp of the evening sky and the soft lights outside. It was almost empty. Two or three women were kneeling before a side altar, and a man was sweeping the church. Lord Arwarton wandered about it, guide-book in hand. Esther sat down on one of the chairs behind the kneeling women. She had brought in with her the scent of the violets and the freshness of the sweet evening air, and her look of rapt content contrasted keenly with the anxious careworn look on the other women's faces. The man who had been sweeping passed close to Esther, and she recognised the Jesuit preacher of the little chapel in London. She started to her feet and would have spoken to him, but he waved her aside. For one moment his kind, sad eyes rested upon her, and then he was gone.

An immense pity for him invaded her heart. She longed to tell him that it was a cruelty, an impossibility, this doctrine of renunciation that he taught ; that it was all a mistake, and that life was magnificently happy—a great banquet to which all were bidden and where each had his place. The church seemed to stifle her, and she stepped out again into the air. It had grown suddenly dim, and the Ave Maria bells began to ring—first a few solemn warning notes, then hurrying into a storm of bells.

A DELIBERATE CHOICE.

GEORGE PETRE was walking slowly along a narrow, high-banked lane when he heard the sound of wheels close upon him, and hastily stepped aside to let a brougham piled up with luggage pass him. Out of the brougham window on his side looked a pretty, girlish face framed in a bonnet that was in the height of fashion. The blue eyes and well-shaped resolute mouth brightened with a sunshiny smile when she saw him.

'Good-bye, George, good-bye!' she cried, and waved her little delicately-embroidered pocket-handkerchief. It fluttered from her hand, and the wind carried it to a spray of budding honeysuckle in the hedge, where it hung until George Petre took it carefully down and looked thoughtfully at it; but meanwhile the carriage had whirled out of sight. It was one of those little things which imply so much minute and daily luxury. The fine web was exquisitely embroidered with pansies, and in one corner the flowers themselves formed the word Viola, the Christian name of its owner. He put it carefully into his pocket, intending to send it presently to the housekeeper at Dene Park, that she might return it to his cousin Miss Willoughby. As he walked over the bare open fields towards the sheltered sheep-pens, his mind was full of the owner of that handkerchief. 'It is such trifles as these that are the barriers between us,' he thought, 'the luxuries that go to make up the sum of her everyday life, as much as work makes the sum of mine. She is not conscious, I suspect, how much such pretty soft

dainties as this are to her ; she takes them as a matter of course. But she would miss them if they were gone. They are necessaries to her.'

Meantime Viola Willoughby and her mother Lady Clotilda were ensconcing themselves in the train on their way to London for the season. The matter of settling in was no light work. There were so many bags and luncheon-baskets, rugs and air-cushions, dressing-cases and foot-warmers, that it needed the undivided attention of two footmen and two lady's-maids, besides that of the station-master and a porter. When at last they were established and the train had started, Lady Clotilda observed in her gentle affected voice, sounding all her R's as a German would, and clipping the final G's of her participles :

'Do you know, my dear child, I think George is one of the many who is sighing after the impossible ! He always looks so forlorn when you go up to London.'

Viola looked out of window.

'One might do worse than marry George Petre,' she said. 'Only he has never asked me—and I imagine never will.'

'My dearest child, he is far too sensible to think the charms of his society could compensate you for the poky life you would lead as a Squireen's wife in the country. Fancy vegetating all the year round at Woodbarton, with no means to do anything or to go anywhere ? I always remember what Uncle Carmichael said to poor Julia when she wanted to marry the curate. "Very well, my dear—marry him by all means, and live in the little yellow brick house that fronts the high road. You will dine in the middle of the day, and have clean dinner napkins once a week, and by virtue of a hundred little economies of this kind you may be able every now and again to afford a drive in the village fly." And that picture so frightened her that she gave up the marriage.'

Viola laughed. Then she said in a grave tone : 'It would be a great deal better for me if I cared less for money and luxuries and costly pretty things.'

'Nonsense, child!' cried Lady Clotilda. 'Pretty things and luxuries were made for you. I think George's dreadful Puritanical notions are really quite wicked. He was so shocked at Sir Vernon's story of some ball where the flowers cost 800*l.*, and a dinner which cost 20*l.* a head. Of course it is a great deal to spend, but it is all for the good of trade—and it's our duty to help trade. *I*,' continued Lady Clotilda in a virtuous tone, 'think it would be better to remember the Catechism, which says we must all do our duty in that state of life into which it has pleased God to call us, and I should think it very wrong not to spend a proper amount upon ourselves.'

That evening, as George Petre sat over the fire alone, he made up his mind on a very important subject. He settled that he would ask his cousin Viola Willoughby to be his wife.

Some twelve years or more ago George was at Oxford reading for Honours, and hoping to take a First Class in Classics. He was a scholar by nature, and loved books and learning. Then came the sudden death of his father, and George found himself in very difficult and straitened circumstances. The family estate, never a large nor a very productive one, was heavily mortgaged, and for his mother and five sisters there was scanty provision. George saw his duty lying plainly before him. He left Oxford, devoted himself to the care of his property and to practical farming, and made a home for his mother and sisters as long as they required one. Mrs. Petre did not survive her husband many months, and two of her daughters followed her. The other three married suitably, and at thirty-four George found himself in possession of a small but unencumbered property, and in a position to marry. But his wife must be content with the quiet, unpretentious life which he could offer her. The little old Manor House, with many gables and low old-fashioned rooms; the sunny, fruitful garden where flowers, fruit, and vegetables grew together; the orchard sloping to the clear stream; the pretty, homely view of green water-

meadows and hazel copse, and, far away, the bold, sweeping line of the downs—such were the simple beauties of the home she would share. Books in abundance, books that overflowed every shelf and table, and were piled (bachelor fashion) in mountains on the floor of his sitting room—these had been his only luxury. Would Viola be content with this? As far as affection was concerned, he knew he had little to fear. Viola cared for him as much as it was in her to care for anybody. But whether she cared for him more than she did for luxury, and position, and all the good things of the world—that was another matter.

It was on a bright, windy day in March that George Petre went up to London to make his venture. The country was beginning to look very pleasant. The meadows were taking that indescribable tint of green which is so delightful to the eye after the dull, soiled colour of the grass in winter. The sap was rising in the trees, and the woods, still leafless, were beautiful with shades of red and pinkish brown and purple, standing out against the rich blue of the sky. Primroses and kingcups filled every hollow and starred the warm banks above the springs, and violets—sweet-scented purple, and white, and dully tinted pink—nestled under their heart-shaped leaves on the south side of the hedgerows. Of these—Viola's favourite flowers—George had gathered enough bunches to fill a little basket. London looked very dingy, he thought; but the budding plane-trees in the squares, and the twittering sparrows, and the crocuses in the park, did their best to testify to spring. The wind was icily cold, and drove relentlessly up the dusty roads; it seemed to wait for you at the corners of the streets, and to spring out like some wild beast upon you. The contrast between the ugly black streets and the inside of Lady Clotilda's warm, luxurious house was marked. The drawing-room—Lady Clotilda prided herself upon her taste—was full to overflowing of comfortable and beautiful furniture and dainty nicknacks. The close, warm atmosphere of the room was heavily scented by large posies of narcissus

and strange-coloured orchids in great, deep-hued jars. A tall gold screen of Spanish leather made a pretty nook by the bright fire, and here George found Lady Clotilda and a young man seated. Lady Clotilda looked annoyed for an instant when she saw the new-comer, but she quickly recovered herself.

'What! you in London, George? What an unexpected treat! And how good of you to come and see us!'

She introduced the young man to whom she was talking as Lord Monmouth, and took up again her conversation with him, every now and again throwing a stray sentence to George, asking him some question, but never waiting for an answer. In spite of her civil reception of him — which, as George knew, was mere politeness and meant nothing whatever—it was evident that she was longing for him to go; but George waited to see Viola.

At last the door opened, and Miss Willoughby came in. She reddened when she saw George, and there was a look of constraint on her pretty face as she came to greet him.

In an instant Lady Clotilda had arisen.

'My darling child,' she said promptly, 'here is Lord Monmouth, who brings us word that the Chinese dog he is giving us is coming to-morrow. Do settle with him where and how we are to meet it. I am always so stupid about arrangements. I should always be lost if it weren't for you!' She turned to George with the greatest solicitude, and continued: 'And now, my dear cousin, I must really have a few words with you. *Do* tell me how dear Ella likes her new home. Tell me about all your sisters. I want so much to hear all the news from home.'

It seemed a pity that the worthy lady should take such pains to deceive her audience, for not one of them had the slightest doubt as to what she wanted. George, with a sarcastic smile, submitted to a fire of questions from her.

Lord Monmouth laughed contemptuously.

'There are not many arrangements to make that I know of,' he said. 'I told Lady Clotilda that I would send the little beast direct to your house.'

Lord Monmouth had a handsome face, with strongly marked features. His figure was short and ill-made. Despite his good looks his appearance was unprepossessing. There was a look of evil temper in the heavy eyebrows and in the clear-cut thin lips. George and he made a curious contrast. George Petre was tall and spare, his features irregular but refined. The whole charm of the face lay in the deep-set, melancholy blue eyes, and in the smile that but rarely lit up and transfigured his countenance.

After a few minutes Lord Monmouth rose to go.

'We shall meet on Friday at Lady Bordeaux's,' he said, and kept Viola's hand in his several seconds longer than was necessary. She did not draw her hand away, but only nodded her head in answer to his question. Lady Clotilda bade him a most affectionate and effusive farewell. When he was gone George turned to Viola:

'I have brought you a basket of violets,' he said. 'I left them in the hall. Shall I fetch them?'

Lady Clotilda sent a footman to fetch them, and with a bored look upon her face relapsed into a big armchair. Viola declared that she would arrange the violets herself. She looked charming, George thought, as she went hither and thither choosing flower-glasses in which to put her flowers; her movements seemed so graceful, her little white hands so active. She wore a grey woollen frock trimmed with soft grey fur, and she set a little bunch of purple and white violets in her dress, pinning it in dexterously with a heart-shaped silver pin. She was satisfied with none of the vases. 'These are all hideous!' she said. 'The only decent ones are in my sitting-room. I shall go and put them in there.'

She lifted up the heavy grey-green portière embroidered with golden dragons and griffins, and George followed her into the tiny room beyond, which was furnished entirely in soft shades of mauve, with here and there a touch of silver.

There was a big white azalea, a little tree covered with delicate snowy blossom, in one corner. Viola went to the little table beside it, ruthlessly cleared off the silver nicknacks upon it, settled herself on a low stool, and began to arrange her violets in Venetian glass bowls.

'You may come and help me,' she said, and George sat down by her and watched the delicate little hands deftly grouping the sweet-scented flowers. He did not speak for some time, and then began in a slow, grave voice:

'Viola, I came here to-day to ask you a question.'

The bright colour flooded her pretty face to the roots of her wavy fair hair.

'Don't ask it, George,' she answered, looking intently at her flowers.

'Why not? Sometimes I have fancied you cared a little for me—and caring all the world for you as I do——'

She looked him full in the face, and her eyes were shining with tears:

'Don't give me the chance of throwing my happiness out of window. Do you remember last summer we read some of Dante together—about the man who lost his soul by making "*il gran rifiuto.*" Don't give me the chance of making my "great refusal."'

She paused, and then went on, speaking bitterly now:

'Look at all these pretty things in this room—they, and ambition, and the love of pleasure are dearer to me than anything else. I know myself so well that I couldn't be happy without them. You don't know how bad and worldly I am. I should weary of the quiet peaceful life—the good happy life—at Woodbarton. Why should you want to marry me, George? I am not the sort of wife for you.'

'What does it matter if I love you—and you care for me? The life wouldn't weary you then.'

'Ah, George, but I don't care enough for you, for all that! I am worldly to the core, worldly by nature, worldly by education. I am honest about it: sincerity is the only merit I lay claim to. No, dear. I should always be want-

ing more than you could give me. You think I am generous because I like giving to the poor people. I only give what I don't want myself. You denied yourself everything until you had made every cottage on your estate comfortable. I should have been very sorry for the poor people, but——my pleasures would have come first. Don't, dear'—and now her voice changed, and her tone was very gentle and persuasive—'don't say any more. I can't bear to pain you who have been so good to me. Whatever little scraps of good intention I possess (and I don't lay claim to anything except *intentions*) I owe to your teaching and example. Dear, kind, good George, don't say any more.'

He bade her good-bye without another word.

When he was gone Lady Clotilda began to grumble. 'I am sure I don't know what possessed George to come to-day. I am sure Lord Monmouth wanted to propose. I wish I had managed to tell the footman I would be at home to nobody except Lord Monmouth. Why didn't you take Lord Monmouth into your sitting-room to show him something or other? But you are so helpless. I have to do everything. You seem to forget that you are twenty-three, and your father says with these agricultural troubles he really can't afford another London season. But I have to think of everything—you throw away all your chances.'

It was the Thursday before Whit Sunday. The lilacs and laburnums round the little old Manor House at Woodbarton were in blossom. It was raining—a shower of tepid rain—and the birds were singing triumphantly. George was standing in the porch, when he heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the gravel. Viola and her groom cantered up to the house. She sprang from her saddle, and ran into the porch for shelter. The bright drops were sparkling in her pretty hair, and on her cheeks flushed with riding.

'I am come here to get out of the rain,' she cried; 'I have just been having such a bad cold that I mustn't run any risks.'

She followed him into the oak parlour, and there in the window-seat she sat and watched the falling rain and the birds darting to and fro, every now and then, with a poor wriggling worm in their bills. George made no reference to his visit to London, but talked of indifferent matters. Viola rose and turned over the volumes heaped upon the solid, old-fashioned table in the centre of the room.

'You always have such nice books,' she said. 'What pleasant winter evenings you must have in this dear old room with all these books. Do you remember the readings you and Ella and I have had together? Ah! those happy days have gone for ever.' She gave a sigh.

The rain had ceased, and George pointed this out to her.

'Oh, don't send me away,' she cried, 'let me have one more afternoon here. Let us go round the garden, and then you must take me to the dairy, and give me some cream.'

They walked along the grassy paths, Viola gathering flowers ruthlessly as she went—great boughs of fragrant lilac, the first China rosebuds, lilies of the valley, and deep-coloured pansies. The green riding-habit set off to perfection her slender figure. She had flung off her hat, and the gentle west wind was stirring the wavy tangle of her hair. Her old, bright, unaffected self always seemed to reappear when she was at Woodbarton; she was never the 'smart,' cynical, worldly Viola there. It was pleasant to see her in the spotless dairy, sitting on the wooden shelf, perched among the red earthen pans, swinging one daintily-shod foot all the while as she drank creamy buttermilk and ate a big slice of home-made brown bread. At last she looked at the watch upon her wrist—a little watch set in diamonds—and said regretfully:

'Now I must go, or they will wonder at home what has become of me.'

When Viola was on her horse, gathering up her reins to ride away, she leaned forward to say good-bye.

'It has been like the dear old days,' she said—'it is the last of the dear old days.' Her voice was tremulous with tears. But she set her horse into a canter, and was gone without another word.

The long shadows were creeping up the green terrace-walk. One solitary thrush on a pear-tree, snowy with blossom, sang a clear chant—sometimes, so it seemed to George, a song of triumph, sometimes a strain of indefinable melancholy. The young man leant against the trunk of a slender laburnum; the yellow tresses on the graceful branches shone pale-yellow against the exquisite evening sky—a pure vault of tender blue in which a crescent moon sailed serenely. A great flood of love and hope seemed to sweep over him, and to blot out all the minor things of life.

On Sunday morning the big pew in the little parish church was full of guests; besides Lady Clotilda and the Squire there were at least twelve people, and among them Lord Monmouth. But Viola was absent. When the service was over George did not wait to speak to his cousins, but walked quickly homewards. However, Lady Clotilda sent a footman after him to beg him to come and speak to her. George retraced his steps, and joined Lady Clotilda in the lime avenue that led from the church to Dene Park gates. She greeted him very graciously. When they were a few paces removed from her guests she said:

'I have a piece of news which I am sure will interest you. Of course it is a secret for the present; but these things soon get out, you know, and I feel that you, as a cousin and a near neighbour, ought to be one of the first to hear it from my own lips. Dear Viola is engaged to Lord Monmouth. It was only settled last night. He is most devoted, and the dear child herself is radiantly happy. His name and position and family are just what we could wish—and' (this is a secondary thought) 'he is quite charming.'

There was a silence for a moment. Then George broke it.

'I hope she may be very happy. Please tell her how I wish her every good thing.'

Every particle of colour had ebbed out of his face. Lady Clotilda was startled, but she did not know what to say. She felt that she could now afford to be sorry for him, and mercifully held her tongue.

He lifted his hat, and left her. Everything seemed to him now like a horrible dream, nor for many hours could he realise that Viola was lost to him. All that long night he walked about the fragrant garden where the nightingales were singing, until at dawn it seemed to him that he had in some sort mastered his grief and could face life. Not all the years that were to come, not all the changes they could contain, could ever, he thought, bring healing to his wound. That is what we all think, undervaluing the balm that time and life give to most of us. But though the wounds heal, the scars remain to our dying day. Let any hand, however gentle, touch them, and the pain thrills through every nerve and fibre.

George did not see Viola again before her wedding. This took place in London, and the harvest made an excellent pretext for his staying at home.

Some months later the neighbourhood was full of whispered rumours that Lord Monmouth's marriage was turning out badly. Lord Monmouth's temper, people said, was unbearable; but she had known all about that before she married him, and so, they said harshly, 'no one could pity her.' In January Viola came home alone, looking miserably ill and wretched, which in some sort confirmed the rumours. Lady Clotilda, it is true, told an elaborate story of Lord Monmouth's being detained by business, and she even said that her own anxiety to have her precious child with her for a long visit had induced him to spare Viola, though most reluctantly. Viola herself preserved a haughty silence, and seemed indifferent to everything and everybody.

One bitter afternoon towards the end of January, when a black east wind was sweeping over the bare fields, George was walking through a copse with a gun on his shoulder. He had come out with the intention of getting a rabbit for a sick labourer who fancied it would tempt his failing appetite. Midway in the wood George met Viola. It was the first time he had seen her to speak to since she had returned home, and he now was about to pass her with a brief greeting. But she stopped him.

'I am trespassing in your woods, George,' she said, with a melancholy smile, 'looking for the snowdrops which used to grow in this copse.'

He answered with some commonplace remark, and was about to walk on. But she turned to him with a very sweet and piteous look in her eyes.

'Oh, George, do stay,' she said—almost as a child might have spoken; 'do stay and talk to me—I am so miserable.'

And then she told him how wretched she was—how her husband's temper was quite uncontrolled; a terrible temper beyond all endurance, making himself almost as miserable as it did all around him. She had left him with the intention of never returning. Her father approved of her resolution, but her mother was anxious to avoid the scandal of a separation, and could not bear the idea that she should lose the advantages that her position in Lord Monmouth's house gave her.

'Why do you tell me this?' George asked, in a voice that seemed stern to her.

'Why? Oh, George, don't think it horrid of me, but I have no one whom I can go to for advice and help, and you are always kind.'

'I suppose your difficulty is to see where your duty lies?' His voice sounded harshly to him, and yet how tenderly he felt for her!

'Duty, duty.' Viola paused. 'You know I was brought up to think little of duties. No; I think,

perhaps, it is my duty to return. But how can I live that wretched life? Once I thought *things*—beautiful things, luxury, position, money—were all I wanted in life, and now I have them I find they are not all. Don't be angry, George; I am utterly miserable.'

'My dear Viola, my dear Viola,' he said gently, as though he were speaking to a little child, 'don't think your trouble does not—does not touch me. But, after everything that we thought made life worth living is gone, after pleasure has lost all its savour, after happiness is dead, there yet remains duty.'

And as they paced the rough path together he spoke to her with an eager eloquence that surprised himself—an eloquence that sprung from the intolerable pain at his heart.

The pale winter sun was low in the dull skies when Viola left him: 'Good-bye, and God bless you! God bless you many, many times!' she said.

A few days later she joined Lord Monmouth in London. Years have come and gone since then, and Viola has lived a life of little happiness, but not devoid of consolations. Those who know her story, who know how she married, not for love but for ambition, respect her now for her life of dutifulness. Children have brought sunshine to relieve the dreariness of her lot.

THEOPHILA

A GREAT open space of down turf, dotted here and there with juniper bushes, stretching away in undulating lines like the waves of a green sea, to the edge of the horizon; flocks of sheep tinkling their bells as they browsed on the slopes of the chalk downs; a lark poised high in the air, singing rejoicingly; a July sky spread over my head, intensely blue just above me, and paling into tender vagueness where it touched the soft grey rim of distance; the ground at my feet enamelled with orange birdsfoot trefoil and purple thyme—and from the south a strong sweet wind, which had travelled over miles and miles of ripening cornfields, of hazel copse, of beech-wood, and of fragrant down, before it reached me. It stirred the quaking grass at my feet, and drove the swift shadows before it along the slopes of the great down. To me it brought a breath of the past, of that past which day and night, waking and sleeping, is always with me. This sweet wind is the same gay south wind that used to blow, years ago, up the green alleys and over the sweetbrier and lavender hedges of the garden where Theophila and I used to wander together the live-long afternoon of a Saturday.

Every nook and corner of the old red-brick manor-house where Theophila lived is dear to me—the panelled parlour that was painted pale green, the old-fashioned tapestry chairs, the bay-window, with the big blue china jar of pot-pourri with a dragon on the lid, the broad, well-ordered garden, and the trim view of meadows and woods, and the church

spire beyond the bar of poplar trees. In the early spring, when the rooks begin to build in the tall beech and sycamore trees that stand just outside the high garden-wall, Theo and I used to stand and watch them by the hour. There were bright patches of colour in the borders, that had looked so bare and brown all the winter, tufts of blue scilla and fringed aconite, the parsley-like leaves of the scarlet anemone, sweet grape hyacinths, and yellow alyssum. There was in that garden the good old rule of 'only look, never touch,' and we used to visit the flowers every day to see how they were getting on, without ever laying an irreverent finger on them. Then all along the grey wall, day by day, there crept a crimson and pale pink flush over the brown nectarine and peach trees, and when these had faded, the cherry, and pear, and apple trees filled the garden with blossom and with the faint smell of almonds; and the thrushes and blackbirds sang all day in the lilac bushes, and Theo and I made cowslip balls in the meadows.

So the years slipped away, years chiefly of suffering and weariness for me, a sickly lad. To Theophila Wedderburn, my little playmate, the years brought health and strength and beauty. I was the only child of very rich parents. My father was a self-made man, and had worked his way up from poverty to enormous wealth. He bought a large straggling property, and built a great red mansion on the bleak chalk hill, a mile distant from the little manor-house where Theophila's parents lived. We had at Chalk Hill an extensive garden and large grounds; there were sickly shrubberies and lawn of new turf round the house. The chalk made the shrubs turn yellow, and the strong wind stunted them. The garden was full of glass-houses and conservatories. We had every fruit and vegetable out of season, and every ugly expensive little plant that could delight a gardener's heart in the ribbon borders and carpet bedding. Indoors everything was marble and gilding, velvet and brocade. We lived in cheerless rooms of state, and ate our meals off silver plate. Neither my father nor my

mother ever felt comfortable in the midst of this magnificence. They lived this kind of life from an obscure idea that it was the fitting thing, and that it was, somehow or other, a duty as regarded me. They were the homeliest, kindest people in the world, oppressed by the burden of their wealth, and sick to death of being waited upon. I was their great pleasure and their sole occupation. They had, poor dear people, as they apologetically owned, no expensive tastes, and so showered money upon me; my dress, my education, the ponies I rode, the music which was my one passion, were made to cost enormous sums.

Despite it all, I persisted in growing up as simple in my tastes as it was possible to be. I had everything given me except health, and that seemed to me the one and only good thing in the world. I had a morbid admiration for strength, and despised myself bitterly because I was smaller and weaker than other lads. I loved Theo best when I saw her riding fearlessly on her father's hunters, or shooting with her brother's rifle at a target and hitting the bull's-eye. I was always trying to do the things that other young men did, and always failing. I do not know when I began to love Theo, but I remember that I first discovered how dear she was to me when I returned from a long sea voyage, and found she had grown up from a child into a beautiful young woman in my absence.

It was one of those fresh days in early autumn. The wild south-west wind was running riot in the trees, and had scattered the lawns with yellow and fading leaves. The elms were still green, but showed, here and there, patches of yellow, and the heavy green of the beeches was growing russet. The mignonette, which filled every corner and cranny in the flower-beds, was strangely sweet—sweet as it can only be in early autumn just before it dies. There was the scent of the coming violets in the violet-bed, and the strips of candytuft smelt like honey in the sun. Theo was standing on the stone steps of the terrace, and she greeted

me with a cry of pleasure. She was very beautiful, I thought—very tall, with dark wavy hair, grey eyes like stars, and a colour like apple-blossom on her cheeks. She ran to me with both hands out. They were not small hands, but well-shaped and white—strong, kind hands that were always ready to give help.

'I didn't know you had come back, Edmund!' she cried gaily. 'This is like old days.'

I greeted her shyly, and answered hesitatingly enough to all her flow of questions. I was not thinking of what I was saying. For it had suddenly come to me how much I loved her. It seemed to me—as she stood in the sunshine, and I in the shadow of the clipt yews—that I now knew what a great happiness might be; that come what might, I had seen from my darkness how beautiful life and sunshine could be.

I went home to my mother and told her all that she, with a woman's intuition, had long ago guessed. Every day she found for me some errand that furnished an excuse for a visit to the Manor House. One day it was a basket of grapes to take to Theo's mother. Another time it was to ask for a recipe for damson cheese. I brought Theo books —I only dared to lend them to her—and together in the green parlour, while her mother wrote her letters at the old-fashioned writing table, we read them—she leaning back in the great oak chair that stands by the dragon jar, stitching away at some soft white work, while through the open window there came the scent of mignonette, and the sound of birds twittering in the bushes, and the far-off tinkling of sheep-bells on the down.

'O gentle wind that bloweth south
From where my love repaireth,
Convey a kiss frae his dear mouth,
And tell me how he fareth.'

And all the while I read, the sweet south wind was stealing in through the open casement, lifting lightly the waving

hair on Theo's brow, and stirring the pages of my book of ballads.

'I love songs about the wind,' she used to say. So one day I brought her one of my own making; a very poor thing it seemed to me, but I give it as it stands. Indeed I could not write any verses now if I tried, the desire and the power are both gone from me.

'O wild March wind, that art crying
To the westward over the sea,
To-night my soul, like a swallow,
Is fain to be flying with thee.

Ah me, that my body should be so dull,
And my limbs so weary and slow,
When my soul would be wandering over the waves
As fast as the wild winds can blow.'

'I like that!' she said simply. And she rose and opened the window wide and let in a great gust of fresh sweet air. I did not dare to tell her that the lines were mine, but her few words of praise sent a thrill of pleasure through me.

That evening she dined alone with us. Her father had a cold, and her mother would not leave him. Theo was dressed in soft white muslin, with some monthly roses in her hair and a string of tiny pearls round her throat. The drawing-room at Chalk Hill, with its red velvet chairs that had gold legs, and its red and gold brocade curtains, seemed to grow hideously tawdry when she entered. I had gathered her a large bouquet of stephanotis, white roses, and pale scented heliotrope, and now I felt too shy to give them to her. I made my mother offer them to her. Theo's eyes met mine for an instant, and she coloured crimson. She took the flowers and murmured a few words of thanks, but she scarcely looked at them. There was something strange and frightened in her manner.

The evening passed uncomfortably enough. I played piece after piece on the piano, while all the time I heard my mother's voice in the distance, talking to Theo, telling her stories about me—how good I was, how clever, and how

kind. I grew hotter and hotter as I heard it, and played loudly to drown the sounds.

It grew late, and Theo's carriage never came to fetch her. She was restless. 'I ought to go home,' she said; 'our old coachman must have forgotten to fetch me, and mamma will be anxious.'

My mother immediately offered her carriage.

'No, no,' cried Theo, hastily, 'do lend me a pair of thick shoes and let me walk! I have my big black cloak here. It is not wet; it's a lovely night, and I like the wind. Edmund might take me home.'

I never knew what made her suggest this. She regretted the words directly they had been spoken, but my mother caught at the plan. She would hear of no change. Shoes and coats were quickly produced, and we started.

'Speak to her to-night, my darling,' whispered my mother to me as we left the house.

We walked some way in silence. Theo seemed shy and constrained, and I was revolving in my own mind when and how I would speak to her. I settled I would do it when we reached the last beech in the long avenue.

The wind was rocking in the tall trees, and catching in Theo's black cloak and eddying round her. Grey clouds were drifting across the pale moon. The old trees in the avenue seemed as black as pitch, and the restless wind moaned and sobbed in their dark branches that looked almost like arms despairingly thrown up for help. Theo stopped for a moment to fasten the clasps of her cloak. Suddenly there came an irresistible strong gust of wind. It whirled and roared, and bent the strong trees forward and backward like an angry sea. A blind instinct impelled me to seize Theo and drag her back just as a great branch crashed above her, and fell heavily to the ground. For one moment everything seemed chaos around me, and then I realised where I was, and that Theo, trembling and sobbing like a child, was clinging to me. I had never seen her frightened before, and it gave me a strange thrill

of pleasure to feel that she depended upon me for protection.

'My darling,' I said gently, 'there is nothing now to be afraid of.' And then she looked up to me appealingly, ashamed of her terror. In a moment the quick words started to my lips. I told her that I loved her better than anything else in the world; I said a thousand impetuous things, and she, still clinging to me, let me say them, and only pressed her sweet white face against my shoulder.

We reached the Manor House, and as we stood at the door Theo turned her pale face imploringly to me. 'Don't come in now with me, Edmund. I can never be grateful enough to you. Don't think me very foolish'—she passed her hand wearily over her eyes—'but so much has happened to-night, I want to be quiet to realise it all.' She let me kiss her, and then the door opened, and I saw her pass safely into the warmth and light of the hall, and I turned away in the darkness and wind, with my heart full of happiness.

The next morning I rose early, after a sleepless night. The wind had dropped, and the outside world was wrapped in a soft sheet of clinging rain. I could not stay indoors; the house seemed too narrow to hold my happiness, and I wandered about the lawns, grey with wet, and through the dripping shrubberies. Suddenly I heard a voice calling my name. I turned, and saw Theophila standing by a yellow laurel bush—very pale, and with dark lines beneath her eyes which looked beseechingly at me. Instinctively I knew there was some great grief in store for me.

'Edmund!' she said imploringly, 'don't hate me, don't despise me—but—but I cannot be your wife. I cannot, I cannot.' The large tears rolled down her white cheeks, and her voice was shaken with sobs. She did not dare to face me, but turned away as I came to her.

'Theo!' I cried despairingly, 'is it time you want—time to think it all over?'

'No, no!' and she shrank back from me—'I have tried

to love you. I do love you, like I love my brothers, and mamma wished me to—to like you differently. And last night I tried, I tried hard. But, Edmund, it can never be. It breaks my heart to be so unkind—but forgive me, and forget everything.'

I took her cold and trembling hands in mine, and made her look at me through her tears. 'Theo, don't grieve about it; don't fret. It is foolish of me ever to think you could care for a poor fellow like me. I can't bear to see you unhappy, dear. You are quite free. You shall forget all about last night, and think no more about it.'

She thanked me passionately, with a sense of relief that cut me to the heart, and then she hurried across the lawn, and out of sight. My courage held out until she had gone, and then my misery, like a great sea of trouble, seemed to overwhelm me.

I went abroad for three years, and when I returned I found Theo engaged to be married to a friend of her brother's. The marriage was a happy one, but Theophila did not live to enjoy her happiness. Within the year she and her little baby were laid side by side in the sheltered churchyard beyond the bar of poplar trees. Her husband married again after a few years; her father and mother are long since dead, and the grave which once was gaily adorned with flowers is neglected and overgrown with weeds. Yet one memory at least cherishes the sweet recollection of Theophila as long as life shall last.

A WORLDLY WOMAN'S ROMANCE

It was a day of yellow fog in London. The thick squalid air lay heavy upon the dull street. It had been dark all day, and about three o'clock in the afternoon Lady Clara Presteign, who was spending a couple of nights in a corner of the great house in Berkeley Square, bade the footman pull down the blinds and close the shutters. Lady Clara and her cousin, Mrs. Tempest, drew their easy chairs round the fire. They had made for themselves a little oasis in the desert of the big drawing room, shrouded as it was in brown holland, the chandelier in a bloated bag, and a great indistinct mass of furniture huddled together under coverings in the centre of the room.

Lady Clara was resting after a time of stress. She had accomplished a thing that she desired, and was thankful that the struggle was over. One of her four daughters, Adeline, the pretty one, was engaged to be married. Adeline had shown a perverse fancy for a younger son ; things had gone further than Lady Clara had suspected at the time, and when a perfectly eligible suitor ('not after all the person I should have chosen,' Lady Clara owned with a sigh, 'but one has so little choice nowadays') came forward, Adeline had refused him ; but in the end Lady Clara had triumphed, and Adeline had broken off what she called her engagement, and what Lady Clara called her 'childish silliness' with the younger son, and had reluctantly accepted Mr. Baily. Lady Clara had no doubts or heart searching. She was convinced that she had done the best thing for her daughter. It may well

be that in one sense she had; children grow like their parents when they reach their parents' age, and it was quite possible that once married, and face to face with poverty, Adeline's attack of unworldliness might have passed off, leaving her for ever discontented with her lot. It is a piteous thing when people repent a noble impulse in sackcloth and ashes.

Mrs. Tempest listened sympathetically. All her life she had played the part of a listener; some people fall naturally into that attitude. 'I am sure,' Lady Clara was saying a little plaintively, 'that Mr. Baily is not *my* fancy, but one really must not be too particular. . . . He is a little bore,' she declared frankly, 'but there is no harm in him. It's a good 8,000*l.* a year, and a nice house in London. Adie might do much worse, you know. He doesn't drink or do anything of that kind—I made *particular* enquiries.'

The firelight and the dim flicker of the candles upon the writing table lit up vaguely Lady Clara's face; the carefully preserved figure in the tight-fitting Parisian gown, which had been once smart but was now of a deplorable shabbiness (for no one is so shabby as a fine lady when she has no reason to be smart); the elaborate arrangement of hair, of which little enough was her own; the hands that were not as clean as they might have been, yet were covered with diamond and ruby rings of great price, and the large prominent eyes with the weary lines round them, that the artificial pink and white colouring of the face could not entirely hide. People say harsh things of the women who, no longer young, paint and bedizen themselves. Nothing in life is obviously ridiculous but what it has its pathetic side. The clinging to youth, the poor blind belief that to be thought young is to be young, the unavailing struggle with time and fate—all this is not very funny after all.

'My dear, you have always tried to do your best for the girls,' said Fanny Tempest gently. She was a little sallow woman who had never been pretty; but a life

of unselfishness had given the plain, weary face a certain sweetness and charm.

'Ah, my dear Fanny,' returned Lady Clara with a sigh, 'I know myself how easy it is for a girl to get into a foolish love affair.'

She sat for a while in silence watching the little flames burning blue in the sea-coal. Her eyes had suddenly grown moist; she had gone far back into the past. And then, bit by bit, digressing here and there, she told Mrs. Tempest the following story:—

'You remember, Fanny, that summer—I was seventeen then—when poor papa and mamma went abroad after London and left me alone at Vernham with Mademoiselle, while Roderick was at a tutor's about five miles off. You never were at Vernham—we went there very seldom. It always had a deserted air. A big red brick Inigo Jones house, looking away over miles of open down, with great beech trees at the back where the rooks built. I never hear rooks now without thinking of Vernham. It was very lonely for me. Mademoiselle use to lie in bed until twelve o'clock reading Paul de Kock. She was no use at all as a governess. But I must say this for her, her accent was quite Parisian. Poor dear mamma took the utmost pains about that; she could not bear the horrid Swiss-French that you hear so often. Our French accent and our complexions, I am sure poor mamma did all she could for both; she never allowed us to go near the fire, nor to eat butter, and we always wore blue veils. . . . Roderick used to ride over every Saturday morning quite early, and sometimes on other days of the week besides, and he and I used to go fishing together. There was a young fellow who used to come out with us sometimes, the best fisherman on the river he was. He and his mother owned a little old farmhouse, scarcely bigger than a cottage, and a few fields. He was a truffle-hunter too. They find the truffles with dogs, under the beeches on the downs. He was very handsome, my dear, dark, with good features, and refined looking, like a Vandyck.

Asaph Guyott was his name. He was a Methodist, and very religious, but not a bit ridiculous with it all. He knew his Bible almost by heart, especially all those poetical bits out of Job, and Isaiah, and the Psalms. The Bible and "Pilgrim's Progress" had been practically his only books. Living out of doors as he did all day, he knew everything about the animals and the plants. He could tell you at once what bird was singing only from hearing the notes, and he used to gather all kinds of herbs—'simples'—for his mother, who made them into medicines, teas, and ointments, and so on, and then doctored the poorer neighbours with them. She used to cure them too. . . . You know, Fanny, there were always troubles and squabbles in my home. Poor papa and mamma didn't get on very well together, and then Julia and Matilda were always bickering, and Haverhill used to get into debt, and so did Percy and Roderick, and then there would be dreadful scenes with papa. Well, it seemed to me that the Guyotts' house was like a little heaven on earth : the mother and son so happy and peaceful together, the long low kitchen with its great oak rafters, from which hung bunches of all sorts of dried herbs, and its broad sunny window seats and sweet-leaved geraniums and lemon verbenas seemed to me a haven of peace. It was the first cottage that I had ever been into. Poor dear mamma, you know, never allowed us to go about the cottages for fear of picking up measles or scarlatina or something ; it wasn't *the thing* either in those days. Now, of course, everybody does it, and I'm sure you meet very nice young men slumming in London. I always encourage Violet to go down to her district in the East End. I believe it is more likely to do her *real* good than any amount of balls ; the right sort of men don't go to balls nowadays.

'Asaph Guyott often used to go fishing with Roderick. There are water-meadows, you know, at the foot of the downs, and clear chalk streams where you can see every weed and pebble. Then when the fishing-season was over we went truffle-hunting. Asaph kept two little truffle dogs.

ed to walk for miles with these over the downs. It umn then, and the beeches were all aflame, and the the valleys bright yellow. How well I remember . . . One evening Asaph and I were lost upon the It was late in November, and Roderick had insisted walking half-way back to his tutor's, with him and ffle-hunting on the way. Just after Roderick had nd Asaph and I turned to go home, a down on suddenly—a thick, blinding, white mist like n-wool that blotted out everything. I was not first, because I thought Asaph would be sure to way—but somehow we lost the track. Night and it became bitterly cold; the fog seemed to marrow of my bones. Asaph took off his coat ed me in it, and made me sit down in the hollow of a juniper bush, while he tried to make ay. He was gone so long that I thought he was burst into tears, and when he returned I was silly, my dear, and threw my arms round his bbed. I didn't really know what I was doing, to soothe me like a little child. He couldn't me cry. He never said one word to me that he have said—but from that hour I knew he cared for me. . . . However, he had found the track, got home about nine o'clock. The servants and elle were in a fine fright about us, and she to write and tell mamma if I went on any more ditions. After that day, too, Asaph avoided me. had some excuse when Roderick wanted him to But one Sunday afternoon, Roderick and I went ott's cottage, and we found Asaph alone there. had gone to afternoon chapel and he was reading r the fire. I thought he looked ill and sad. A r came on, and Roderick, after fidgeting about me to shelter there, while he went out to see Asaph never spoke a word until I said ut his being ill-natured now and refusing

always to do anything we asked. He became crimson and said "he was not fit company for people of our station." Whereupon I said, "I don't think you care for our company—you won't do anything now to please me." I was sorry directly the words were out of my mouth. He covered his face with his hands and said he would die to please me. I was frightened, and remembered who I was and who he was, but—I was only seventeen. After that day I used to think a great deal about him, though I didn't see him again to speak to. For papa and mamma and my sisters came home much earlier then they had intended. Haverhill had got into some dreadful scrape, and then, on the top of that, papa found out that Roderick had got into debt—only a few pounds, my dear, but as Haverhill wasn't at home to receive his scolding, poor Roderick got Haverhill's share. And then mamma was put out with me, because she said I looked just like a dairy-maid, so blowsy and red with being out in all weathers. (Health wasn't *the thing* then, as it is now, you know.) Altogether it seemed to me a dreadful time, and that I couldn't bear all the fusses and rumpuses, after the peaceful time I had been having. One bitterly cold winter morning I got up very early and went out to try and find Asaph. He seemed to be the only person who was nice and kind to me. There was a black east wind blowing; I shall never forget how pinched and miserable everything looked, as I went crying through the copse, and reached the stile which leads out on the open down. There I met Asaph. He had been up all night—it was the lambing season—and he was just coming home to breakfast. And then, Fanny, I sobbed and entreated him to take me away and marry me, for I was so miserable at home. I was only a child, Fanny. And he was very gentle and very kind, and told me I didn't know my own mind, and that if he were to take me at my word I should be very sorry for it some day. And all the while the poor fellow loved me as no one has ever cared for me since! I went home again, feeling very much ashamed of myself. And then in a week or so

we went up to London, and Julia got engaged to George Talbot, and mamma presented me at the next Drawing Room, and I hadn't time to think any more about poor Asaph. We never went back to Vernham before I married, and so I never saw him again, but two years after that time I heard that there had been an outbreak of small-pox in the village there, and that Asaph had gone about nursing the sick and reading the Bible to them, and had caught it and died. I was just in the midst of getting my trousseau then, and hadn't time to think of anything else, but I sometimes think of Asaph now—and feel sure that his was the greatest love that has ever fallen to my share.'

Lady Clara paused. Her eyes were full of tears. She went over the past in her mind: the trouble her mother had taken to marry her to Colonel Presteign; her engagement to him, neither caring for the other; the loveless married life of perpetual jars and frets; the Colonel's outbursts of furious temper; her worldly anxieties for her daughters, and the long weary nights and days of chaperonage. There had been very little joy for her in all those years. As she sat thinking, with Fanny Tempest in sympathetic silence beside her, the door opened and Adeline came in. The girl was tall and had that indescribable air of smartness that often holds good for beauty. Just now, in her furs, with flushed cheeks and eyes shining with pleasure, she was really pretty. She held out to her mother some velvet jewel cases. 'Look, mother,' she cried, 'Mr. Baily has just given me these.' And she opened them and showed a magnificent diamond necklace in one, and in the other three half-hoop rings of great value. The stones flashed and sparkled in the light, dull as it was. Lady Clara's tears dried instantly, and her eyes glittered with satisfaction.

'My darling child,' she cried with conviction, 'how beautiful! You must feel now how wisely you have chosen, and how happy Mr. Baily will make you.'

A VISIT TO THE WEST INDIES TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

THERE are no travellers' tales that can compare with the old ones, when the world was still young and full of picturesque wonders; a world of sorcerers and magicians, of pirates and filibusters, a vast, unknown place where adventures of all kinds met the valiant traveller who carried his life in his hand. Now the world is infinitely poorer in possibilities; it has been mapped out with the dullest accuracy, and all the paths that used to be so mysterious have been macadamised and provided with finger-posts.

The earth was still a picturesque and wonderful place in 1693, when the Reverend Father Jean-Baptiste Labat, a missionary of the order of the *Frères Prêcheurs*, sailed for the West Indies. An epidemic had carried off a large number of the missionaries in the French islands, and the survivors begged their Brethren to come out from Europe and help them. The Père Labat and nine other missionaries answered to the call. Jean-Baptiste Labat was then thirty years of age, thin, active, and full of mother-wit; a brave and ingenious French gentleman, and a scholarly priest, well versed in doctrine. Some of his brother-missionaries intended to turn an honest penny by trading in the West Indies, which the Père Labat considered unworthy of their holy office. He sailed from La Rochelle on November 28, in the transport *Loire*, which was commanded by M. de la Heronnière. The fleet was composed of thirty-seven vessels

and a corvette. The man of war, the *Opiniâtre*, carried their admiral, M. de Sainte Marie.

The Père Labat speaks with approval of the food on board; there were two great boxes filled with earth, in which wild chicory, lettuces and radishes grew, and with the addition of beetroot, cress and pickles, these supplied daily a salad for the captain's table at which the reverend Father sat. These boxes were watched by sentry night and day, lest either the rats or the crew might take the fresh herbs.

On the way to Martinique the *Loire* fell in with an English vessel. It was a dark night, with a waning moon; the passengers were playing chess after supper when the sentries gave the alarm. A speedy exchange of shots followed; the English cried 'Hurrah!' as they discharged their cannon, and the French answered with '*Vive le Roi*!' According to the Père Labat the English were disgracefully beaten, and retreated hastily; they had lost thirty-seven men, and had eighty-four wounded.

The *Loire* arrived at Fort St. Pierre, in Martinique, on January 29, 1694, after a voyage of sixty-three days. The Père Labat had himself shaved; he put on a new habit and a black cope, and he tipped the surgeons, the cook, the coxswains, and the cabin boys who had waited upon him. It was the English fashion, he tells us, not to give gratuities direct to servants after a visit in a friend's house: it was the custom to leave a gold or silver piece for them in some conspicuous place in your room. At that time these presents had not yet become the tax which some years later weighed so heavily upon guests. In 1714 Lady Cowper in her Diary notes the increase of such gratuities, and in 1735 Lord Hervey says, 'The conversation . . . fell on the ridiculous expense it was to people, by the money given to servants, to go and stay two or three days with their acquaintance in the country; upon which the Queen said she had found it a pretty large expense this summer to visit her friends even in town.'

A number of negroes came on board at Fort St. Pierre.

They bore upon their backs marks of the whip, 'which,' says the Père Labat, 'excited the compassion of those who were not accustomed to this; but,' he adds, 'you soon get used to it.' He himself was kind to his slaves, and when the Père Caumsels, Superior-General of the mission, gave him the charge of the plantations belonging to the Order, the Père Labat was careful to provide his negroes with good and sufficient food. But he does not venture to judge those who treated their slaves harshly, and after describing horrible tortures inflicted upon negroes, he adds that it might have been necessary to use such measures to repress insurrections. The world in those days believed religiously in punishments. As late as 1768, gentle Fanny Burney says of Oliver Goldsmith: 'He advances many very bold and singular opinions—for example, he avers that murder is the sole crime for which death ought to be the punishment. . . . This doctrine might be contradicted from the very essence of our religion.' The Père Labat, however, condemns the English, whose colonies he afterwards visited in Barbados and St. Kitts, for making no attempt to convert their slaves. He questioned the English clergy upon the subject, and they answered that they thought it would be unworthy of any Christian to keep a Christian brother in slavery. Wherefore they wished the negroes to remain pagans. This curious piece of sophistry shows that doubts upon the morality of slavery were working obscurely in men's minds. The English evaded the difficulty by regarding the negroes as 'soulless,' and as heathens that were scarcely human. They obtained their slaves very cheaply, and treated them, the Père Labat says, almost as harshly as the Portuguese treated theirs. They gave them bad and insufficient food, they worked them to death, and in any case of insubordination they killed them by means of horrible tortures. If the French showed more consideration to their slaves, it was evidently because their negroes cost them more money and were difficult to replace. Originally there was an old law that throughout the territory of the King of France

every man was free. It was only with great difficulty that Louis XIII. was persuaded to allow the inhabitants in his colonies to keep slaves; he yielded when it was urged that slavery gave the best opportunity for converting the heathen. From the Père Labat's account it is evident that the French planters in the West Indies not only permitted, but encouraged, the work of the missionaries among their slaves.

The following cases of conscience were proposed for debate in the Sorbonne:

(1.) Whether merchants, who go to Africa to buy slaves, or agents in the warehouses may buy those whom they know have been stolen from their homes, and may excuse themselves with the plea that what seems to us wrong is a received custom among these races, and authorised by their kings?

(2.) Whether the inhabitants of America, to whom these merchants bring the slaves, may buy indifferently all the negroes that are presented for sale, without enquiry whether they have been stolen, or whether they have been sold for legitimate reasons?

(3.) What reparation should either parties in the sale be obliged to make when they discover that they have bought negroes who have been stolen from their homes?

The final decision of the Sorbonne, which was unfavourable to the planters, was not accepted by the colonists, who declared that the learned doctors had neither property in the islands, nor a share in any of the companies; otherwise they would view the matter differently.

Some negroes—maroons as they were called—escaped into the bush, and lived there on roots, and on the creatures they contrived to kill. According to the laws of the French Colonies, it was permissible to fire at them. If they were killed, 'all that one has to do is to make a declaration' to the authorities. The reward for taking a maroon alive was five hundred pounds of sugar. The second time a slave ran away, his ears were taken off; after the third time the sinews of his legs were cut.

The negroes from Mine, so the Père Labat tells us, were subject to deep malancholy, and many of them committed suicide. They believed that after death they would return to their own country. Two lads of this race—one belonged to the reverend Father—resolved to kill themselves by eating earth. The Père Labat discovered their intention, and he spoke severely to his slave. The lad wept bitterly; he declared he loved his master, but yet he wanted to go home to his father, and soon afterwards he died. Among the slaves of a planter in St. Kitts suicide by hanging became almost an epidemic. The master at last cut off the head and hands of those who had hanged themselves, and put them in an iron cage which he suspended from a tree in his yard. The negroes believed that the dead (or probably their duppies) return after burial, to fetch their bodies, and take them back to their own country. The planter convinced his slaves that those who were thus obliged to return to their own country without heads and hands would be for ever miserable; and by this device he checked the suicidal mania.

The Père Labat tells many stories of Black Art. He himself believed devoutly in sorcery and witchcraft, in common with many of the learned people of his time. 'The Devil,' says Sir Thomas Brown, 'endeavours to propagate the unbelief in witches, whose concession infers his co-existency; by this means also he advanceth the opinion of total death, and staggereth the immortality of the soul.' The Père Labat says that almost all the negroes in the islands who had left their own country as full-grown men, were—more or less—magicians, sorcerers, and poisoners. A negress belonging to the Order had been ill for some time, and none of the doctors understood her case. She had been taken to various negro quacks in the country, but had received no relief. The Père Labat believed, no doubt rightly, that these obscure illnesses were often caused by slow poisons, of which the quacks knew the composition, and sometimes the antidotes. At last, tired of the useless

expense, the reverend Father forbade her to see any doctor except the house-surgeon. One night he heard that a negro quack was in her cabin. Labat looked through a crack, and saw a 'little earthen marmoset' upon a seat in the centre of the hut. The negro doctor was on his knees before it, apparently praying devoutly. He then took half a calabash in which there was fire, he put some gum upon it, and offered incense to the little figure; after which he prostrated himself. When he had done this several times, he asked the little earthen marmoset if the negress would die or whether she would recover. The Père Labat heard him ask the question, but he could not hear the answer. Directly the reply was given the sick negress and some negroes in the hut began to weep and to wail. The reverend Father ordered that the sorcerer should be caught and all his apparatus seized. The negress confessed that she heard a little voice come from the figure which said that she would die in four days. Labat broke in pieces all the implements, and condemned the magician to three hundred strokes of the whip, which almost flayed his back. The other negroes begged him to spare the sorcerer, but the reverend Father answered that since he was a magician he could feel no pain. 'The tiresome thing was,' says the Père Labat, 'that the negress really did die on the fourth day.' However, he adds, he took the precaution of confessing her, and had the consolation of seeing her die a good Christian, and penitent for her sin.

Monsieur Vanbel, a Danish official in St. Thomas, told Labat the following story. A negro was condemned to be burnt alive for sorcery, and for making a little earthenware figure speak. Monsieur Vanbel met him on his way to execution and said to him: 'Well, you will never make your little earthenware figure speak again. It is broken.' The sorcerer answered: 'Sir, if you wish, I will make the cane you hold in your hand speak.' The Judge gave his permission, and the negro set the stick in the ground, and performed certain ceremonies before it. He asked M. Vanbel what

he desired to know. Vanbel inquired if a certain vessel that he was expecting had started, when it would arrive, who would be on board, and what would have happened during the voyage. The sorcerer again went through some ceremonial. Then he stepped back, and bade M. Vanbel draw near to his cane, and hear the answers to his question. Vanbel did so; he heard a little voice, 'clear and distinct,' that said: 'The ship that you expect left Elsinore on such a day, such-an-one commands her, the passengers are so and so. You will be content with the cargo. She suffered slightly from a gale in the Tropics, but she will be in harbour here within three days.' The negro was executed. Within three days the vessel arrived, and the sorcerer's prediction was verified.

The Père Fraisse brought a little negro boy of nine or ten from Guinea to Martinique. The child heard the reverend Fathers complain of the drought, and he asked them whether they would like a great or a little rain upon their garden, for he could bring either there. The Fathers consulted together; finally their curiosity triumphed and they asked him for a little rain, comforting themselves with the thought that the child was not yet baptized. The Père Labat remarks elsewhere that baptism infallibly exorcised the devil when he possessed negroes, which was often the case, yet that it is true that a sorcerer became much more powerful in his art after he had been baptized. The little boy fetched three oranges, and set them on the ground at intervals. He prostrated himself reverently before each of the fruit. Then he took three little boughs from the orange-tree, and after again prostrating himself, put them upon the fruit. For the third time he prostrated himself, saying some words with great care and respect. Then he took one of the little boughs, and looked in turn towards each quarter of the horizon, until he saw a small cloud; it was very light, and a great way off. He stretched out the bough towards this, and instantly the cloud fell in gentle rain upon the garden. It lasted nearly an hour; afterwards

the child buried the fruit and the twigs. This boy was baptized later, and was given the name of Amable. He became a pupil of the Père Labat, and confessed to having performed this piece of magic. Four of the reverend Fathers also testified to it.

In 1696 the Comte de Gennes, who commanded a squadron, took a fort and carried off the negroes on his men-of-war. A negress on one of the ships arrested the progress of the vessel by some diabolical art, so that a voyage that generally took forty-eight hours was not finished in seven weeks. Food and water began to fail, and there was a mortality amongst the negroes. Some of them in dying complained that this negress had threatened to eat their heart, and that ever since they had wasted away in great pain. After death examination showed that their hearts and livers were 'as dry and empty as a balloon,' although otherwise they seemed in their natural condition. The captain ordered his men to flog the negress. The surgeon-major, thinking that the blows were not heavy enough, struck her himself with all his force. The woman affected to feel no pain, but she said to the surgeon that she would make him repent what he had done; she would eat his heart. In two days the surgeon died in agony, and it was shown that his heart was dried up like those of the negroes. The captain became frightened, and treated the negress indulgently. He promised to put her and some other slaves ashore if she would consent to make the ship go on. To this she agreed, but she wished first to give a proof of her skill. She asked if there was any fruit on board, and she was shown some water-melons. She declared that without touching them, or even approaching them, she would eat them within twenty-four hours. The melons were then locked up. At the end of the twenty-four hours, when the captain examined them, he found them quite empty; nothing remained of them except the dry skin, which was stretched out like a balloon. The paper which contained a written account of this sorcery was shown to the Père Labat. It

was signed by many eye-witnesses, and was in the possession of the Comtesse de Gennes.

The Père Labat gives a remarkable instance of the strength of native poisons used by the negroes. The Sieur de Saint Aubin had lost from time to time a large number of his slaves. They had died in great agony after a few hours' illness, and he had noticed that the victims were always those to whom he had shown some special mark of favour. At last a dying negro sent for him, and confessed that he had been the cause of these deaths; he had poisoned thirty of his fellow-slaves. For this he used the juice of a plant growing on the sea-shore. The negro was careful to let one of his nails grow longer than the rest, and with this he scratched the stem of the plant until the nail was filled with the thick juice. He then invited his victim to drink some spirits with him. He himself drank first, and then poured out some of the spirit for his friend from the same bottle into the same calabash that he had used, but he held the calabash in such a manner that his long nail, filled with the poison, dipped into the liquid. Within two hours the victim would fall into horrible convulsions, followed shortly by death. The Père Labat adds that he is careful not to give the name of this poisonous plant. Its effect is so strong that if it be bruised, and any person put it to his nose for the space of time that it would take to say half an Ave Maria, he falls into a fainting-fit. (The reverend Father constantly measures time by the length of a Miserere, or a Paternoster, or Ave Maria.) Poisoning is still a fine art in the West Indies. Not long since a priest in Hayti was poisoned by means of the sacramental cup. It was supposed in this instance that bamboo powder was the means used, as he died in great suffering; but often the poisons are so subtle that it is impossible to detect them.

The Père Labat was on excellent terms with the French filibusters. These gentlemen undertook to keep the West Indian churches well supplied with rich stuffs without its costing either themselves or the Church a penny. 'They

have always,' he says gratefully, 'shown extreme care in the pillage of towns, or in the taking of ships, to put aside that which they think suitable for the churches. . . . Their piety corresponds with their courage.' In a charming *Dictionnaire Œconomique* of the seventeenth century there is a chapter on almsgiving where the writer tells us that it is established by the early Fathers that those who never give alms undoubtedly incur *la damnation éternelle.* But *il y a avec le ciel des accommodements* ; and the author proceeds to show how by the careful management of a poultry-yard, and of the scraps and refuse of a household, alms may be given, and the doom escaped without any extra expense. It was something after this fashion that the filibusters conciliated Heaven. One of them, a certain Captain Daniel, landed at Saintes, and seized the priest and some of the people. He however explained that he only wished to buy provisions, and to have Mass performed on board his ship. A tent was set up on deck, and eight cannons and a volley of musketry were fired off before the service began. There was a second volley at the Sanctus, a third at the Elevation of the Host, a fourth at the Benediction, and a fifth after the Exaudiat and the prayer for the King, followed by a great shout of *Vive le Roi.* 'There was only one little incident, says the Père Labat, 'that slightly disturbed the devotions.' One of the crew behaved himself irreverently during the Elevation of the Host. The captain reprimanded him, whereupon the pirate swore angrily, and Captain Daniel there and then shot him through the head with a pistol, vowing that he would do the same by anybody whom he found wanting in respect to the Holy Sacrament. When Mass was over he had the body flung into the sea, and gave the priest some handsome gifts.

The Père Labat describes the English planters' houses and modes of life in Barbados and in St. Kitts. He speaks of their disdain for other nations, of the rich and tasteless dress of the ladies, burdened and spoilt by incongruous ornament and trimming ; of the cleanliness of their houses ;

of the interminable meals, and the over-eating and drinking which carried so many people off in the unhealthy season. The Père Labat heard and saw much of yellow fever in the English Colonies and elsewhere. He himself had it at Fort St. Pierre, in a house where ants swarmed. These insects avoided him when he was at his worst, which was looked upon by his attendants as a sure sign of approaching death. When he became convalescent the ants returned to him, and devoured him as they did everything and everybody else.

The Père Labat was once carried off by Spaniards, of whom, as a nation, he had a poor opinion. 'It is as natural for Spaniards to steal as it is for women to weep when they want to,' he says. They would have killed him had he not been a priest, but in virtue of his office he was very civilly treated. He dined with the Governor of the Spanish Colony on board the Admiral's ship, and he describes the soiled table-linen, the dirty silver plates, and the one knife that had to serve for all the company. The food, however, was good and plentiful. The Governor was fed by his servants as though he were a baby; he was not suffered to move hand or foot.

There is scarcely a dull page in the six volumes that contain the Père Labat's account of his travels. Whether he is speaking of the war with the English, in which he took his full share; or of the Caribs, who prefer the flesh of Englishmen to that of Frenchmen or Spaniards on the ground that the English are more tender and well-flavoured; or of the Spanish island Anegada, where a great treasure was buried, and lies undiscovered to this day, he is always a pleasant companion. He remained in the West Indies for some years, when he returned to France.

A WEST INDIAN TRAGEDY

We were sitting one January evening in the verandah of a West Indian house. It had been sultry at midday, and sheets of rain had slipped over the peaks of the velvet-blue mountains—rain that crashed like a troop of cavalry, a great deluge of tepid water that swept over the slopes of the hills, cleansing and refreshing. Presently the clouds had floated by, or had spent themselves, and the day had cleared into a soft grey afternoon, like an English afternoon in spring; and then we had driven along the road fringed with scarlet akee trees and broad-leaved plantains, into a great fold of the mountains. The air was full of the soft penetrating scent of logwood, now in yellow blossom; a little breeze lifted the wet leaves and rustled the palms; the streams were brimming, and brown water poured foaming over the rocks with the sound of far off Devonshire rivers. There was an echo of home in the air—a vague suggestion of England. Now we were sitting in the cool dark verandah; a fresh air was blowing, swift bats swung through the dusk, and the crickets chirped in a shrill chorus. The conversation drifted idly from one subject to another; presently we found ourselves discussing fate.

'Character is Fate,' I said, quoting Emerson.

But Mrs. Talbot, swaying slowly to and fro in her rocking chair, dissented. 'No; at least, not always. Circumstances count for something in most people's lives; they force some natures entirely out of their bent.' And then she told me the following story:—

'It was about four years ago,' she said, 'that my brother Jim and I first came to the West Indies. We stayed at Merivale with Mr. Carew while Jim looked about him before buying an estate. One day Mr. Carew told us that he had accepted an invitation to dinner for himself and us from the Mayers, who were his nearest neighbours. "Mayer is a bad fellow," he said, "but Mrs. Mayer, poor creature, is harmless enough, and has a hard time." We rode to the Mayers' house. Everything then was new to me; the emerald green sugar canes, the patches of sweet potato and of broad-leaved koko, the little negro huts hedged in by a flame of scarlet hibiscus, the graceful star-apple trees—every leaf lined with sheeny brown—the stately mountains over which the broad blue lights slide—all these things were wonderful and delightful to me. As we drew near a little negro town I saw a solitary hut with a written announcement upon it, "Little Doctor for fever, 6*d*." The hut stood some way back from the road, not far from a gigantic silk-cotton tree. "What does Little Doctor mean?" I asked. "An Obeah-man," said Mr. Carew, "only he does not dare call himself by his real name. He is a French negro from Hayti." About a mile further was Harmony Hall, where the Mayers lived. It was the ordinary planter's house, with a big drawing-room that went the whole depth of the building. This room was full of cheap and horrible nick-nacks; there was an abundance of chenille monkeys and china pugs; pincushions that represented sunflowers, or fish, or violins, or anything else that was not and could not be a pincushion. All the furniture—chairs, flowerpots, piano-forte, lamps, looking-glasses—was draped and swathed in terra-cotta or sea-green silk, and the walls were adorned with tinselled fans, china plates, and brackets. It was like a charity bazaar. In this bower sat Mrs. Mayer, a pretty faded woman, with her bleached flaxen hair elaborately frizzed and contorted. She was dressed like a fashion-plate; she had a simpering manner and a hippety-pippety laugh, and her conversation

was the height of gentility—all about the Royal Family and the latest Society news in the *World* and *Vanity Fair*, which lay in a conspicuous place on one of the flimsy little tables. Her boy Victor stood beside her, a poor, thin, bloodless little boy, with long curls and his mother's pale blue eyes. He was as painfully dressed as she was, and looked like an illustration in a tailor's advertisement.

'Presently cocktails, according to West Indian fashion, were brought in, and at the same time Mr. Mayer came in. He was a villainous-looking little man, with one cunning eye that squinted east, and one watery, cowardly eye that squinted south, and horrible, dirty, hairy hands like those of a monkey. His voice was much too big for his body. He pressed the cocktails upon us, and then, seeing the child, he called to him to come, giving meantime a quick glance at his wife, and he made the boy drink a glassful. Mrs. Mayer apparently paid no heed. She was commenting at that moment upon the well-known dislike entertained by the Princess of Wales for crinolines. At dinner Mr. Mayer made Victor bring his little chair away from his mother's side and sit by him. He plied the child with wine until the little fellow became noisy and contradictious, and finally had to be carried off to bed by one of the black servants, shouting out ugly words as he went. Mr. Mayer laughed and looked at his wife. I fancied that she was trembling, but she went on in her mincing voice asking Jim whether it really was true what the *World* hinted, that Lord Hugo had jilted Lady Adelaide? As we rode home that night Jim abused her, as I thought unjustly. "That stupid woman," he said, "doesn't care a scrap how that wretched child of hers goes to the dogs, as long as she can fig herself out in what she imagines to be the latest fashion, and can fill her drawing-room with rubbish." "Poor little Victor," said Mr. Carew; "he's seven years old now. By the time he's fourteen he'll begin to drink himself to death as his father is doing now. Mayer's always drinking, though he's

seldom actually drunk. She, poor soul, is a silly little doll of a woman who couldn't harm a fly."

'It was some weeks after that night that the mails brought me anxious news from home. I could not sleep, but tossed about; until, looking out of window and seeing the lovely moonlight, I dressed and slipped noiselessly out of the house. I walked down the road a long way—further than I knew at the time, for the exercise stimulated thought, and I saw nothing. When I stopped and looked about me, I had reached the great silk-cotton tree on the outskirts of the little negro town. The tree looked very gaunt with the moonlight shining full upon its huge buttressed trunk and on the branches, which were almost bare. Only a little way beyond it was the house of the "little doctor for fever"; the other huts were hidden by a bend in the road. Suddenly I became aware of a strange, penetrating smell, an intensely horrible smell that filled the air. It came in great waves; it seemed to suspend my breath; and it turned me sick and faint with fear and loathing. I can compare it to nothing I have ever known before or since; I could fancy that hell might smell like that; it was more terrible than either death or corruption. I had not the strength to go on, but for an instant I leant against one of the great folds of the silk-cotton trunk. The horrible smell passed by, and then there followed a wave of some sickly, cloying scent. I heard a woman's voice from the closed hut cry, "Let me out; I can't bear any more," and I saw the door open and a figure run hastily out and along the road out of sight. I was concealed, and my view was partially hidden by the buttressed trunk, but I felt almost certain that I had recognised Mrs. Mayer. At any other time my curiosity would have been excited; but my mind was full of my own anxieties. I did not mention what I had seen to anyone.

'One morning, a few days later, when I was riding with Mr. Carew, a sudden storm of rain came up; we were near Harmony Hall, and we took shelter there. The Mayers were sitting down to breakfast. I thought that Mrs. Mayer

looked weary and pale, but she was dressed with as much care as ever—in an apple-green silk wrapper, which made her faded face and bleached hair above it seem almost ghostly. She called for fresh tea-cups. Mr. Mayer told her in his bullying way to fill the two cups she had before her and to pass them to Mr. Carew and myself without waiting any longer, but she only fidgeted with the tea-things. He shouted at her in his big, blustering voice, and came round to the tray. She was trembling all over. "I can't," she said. "This cup isn't clean," and she held it up. I was sitting close to her, and could see a very minute yellowish smudge inside the rim. "That's nothing—it's quite clean enough for me," said Mr. Carew goodnaturedly. "Give him the cup at once, Louisa!" shouted Mr. Mayer. He put out one hand to seize the cup and caught hold of the teapot with the other, when Mrs. Mayer, with a dexterous whisk of her long sleeve, threw the cup on the floor and it broke in pieces.

'About a week after this little scene we heard from one of the negroes that Mr. Mayer had gone suddenly raving mad. A few hours later he was dead. Mr. Carew rode over to Harmony Hall. He found Mrs. Mayer in hysterics. The doctor who was there ordered her complete rest and change of scene; her friends had been telephoned for, and immediately after the funeral they would take her and Victor back to the big town with them. Mr. Mayer's death was caused by his habit of drinking, the doctor said. Mrs. Mayer had lost her head, and had gone into hysterics when her husband had been first taken ill, so that there had been some delay in sending for the doctor, who had only arrived just as the wretched man was dying. "Poor little woman!" the doctor said; "I never saw anyone more upset than she was. I suppose that she really was fond of that brute Mayer. What extraordinary creatures women are!"

'For a month or more I heard nothing of the Mayers. Then one morning the doctor paid us a call. "Such a sad

thing has happened," he said. "Poor little Victor Mayer is dead. His mother had never recovered the shock of Mayer's death, and couldn't bear the idea of ever returning to Harmony Hall. She and Victor were to have gone back to England in the next steamer, when the poor little chap was taken very bad with fever, and he died last night. I think that poor woman will go out of her mind."

'I thought so too an hour later, when Mrs. Mayer galloped up to Merivale. She flung herself off the saddle, leaving the reins loose on her pony's neck, and hurried into the sitting-room, where Mr. Carew was writing. She was evidently dressed in the same crumpled, stained wrapper in which she had sat up all night. Her fair hair was hanging down in a tangle. She had lost all her genteel, simpering manners and her hippety-pippety laugh, and she spoke in a hard, shrill voice.

'"Mr. Carew," she said, "I have come to you because you are a magistrate. I want to make a deposition. It was I who killed my husband. I poisoned him. I did it for little Victor's sake—so that his father should not teach him to drink and swear, and to be a blackguard like himself. Now my darling is dead it's all of no use—and they had better take me and hang me, for I am a murderess."'

A BLACK KING IN EXILE

It was on a warm evening in February that I first heard the story of Ja-Ja. A little black boy in rags, sitting in the branches of a blossoming mango tree, was playing serenely on a tin pipe; behind him the wide sky was flushed with clear orange over the darkening mountain peaks and the purple sea. Below the little piper lay moist ravines and bush and crooked-stemmed cocoa-nut palms that love the salt, along the rim of the shore, and beyond all these the houses and huts of Kingstown, where Ja-Ja, exiled King of Opobo, ate his heart, like the caged bird of prey that he was, until at the end of time the ship came to fetch him home to West Africa.

The dignified old man with cunning eyes, wearing always his insignia of majesty—the peacock's feather—in his hat, whom the people of St. Vincent remember so well, was not born a king. He was a slave bought by the Pepple family, who reign over Bonny; Pekkule House, in Grand Bonny, is their palace. But he was a king by virtue of his courage, his boldness in seizing upon opportunity, and his statesman's craft. 'Though he is in origin a runaway slave,' says Mr. H. H. Johnston, 'he was cut out by Nature for a king, and he has the instinct of rule, though it not unfrequently degenerates into cruel tyranny.' He raised himself by trading, and finally, after a vain attempt to dethrone his masters in Bonny, he settled in Opobo, where he was acknowledged as chief in 1873, and afterwards declared king by Consul Livingstone.

But in 1881 there arose grave disputes between Ja-Ja on one side, and the British traders and some native chiefs on the other. These troubles, Ja-Ja informed the Foreign Office, were of the Consul's making. But the facts of the case did not bear out this theory. 'An old man and ignorant,' is his description of himself; yet his despatches show a great deal of craft and cunning, especially in his interpretation of various articles in the treaties that he had made with England. These treaties are signed by himself, his sons, and his chiefs, and the signatures have the sound of names in a dream, solemn nonsense remembered upon waking. Saturday Ja-Ja, Sunday Ja-Ja, Cookey Gam, Duke of Norfolk, and the Hon. Strongface. After much weary parleying, Mr. H. H. Johnston, then acting as Consul, had an encounter with Ja-Ja's 'Boys,' in which heavy pointed sticks hurtled through the air, and, says Mr. Johnston with a touch of humour that is like an oasis in the dreary waste of the Blue Book, 'but for the fortunate interposition of my umbrella, I should have received a blow on the head that would have effectually freed Ja-Ja from consular interference for a considerable time.' At last in 1877 Ja-Ja, hemmed in on all sides, surrendered himself, and was taken to Accra. 'I would suggest,' writes George Pepple, King of Bonny, to Mr. Johnston, 'now that Ja-Ja is arrested, that no half-measures should be taken in dealing with him.' Ja-Ja himself, as George Pepple knew, was not a person of half-measures; in 1869 he had engaged in a war with Bonny, which the Blue Book says—leaving a fine scope for the imagination—'was fruitful of everything that was dreadful.' A full enquiry was held at Accra by Admiral Sir W. Hunt-Grubbe, and there Ja-Ja was deposed from his sovereignty and condemned to exile. He was given his choice between Ascension Island, St. Helena, and one of the West Indian islands. Finally St. Vincent was chosen, and thither the old man was carried.

When he arrived at Kingstown a crowd of negroes were waiting on the quay to welcome him. Ja-Ja utterly des-

pised them and their reception. 'What dese niggers want of me,' he said, 'I Ja-Ja?'—pronouncing his name with dignity, as though it were the name of some emperor, and not that of a poor old black man deposed from his chieftainship. But he carried himself proudly to the end. 'I still Ja-Ja, the King,' he used to say. He was allowed the company of one of his wives in his exile, but, so he told the officials in St. Vincent, the wrong one had been sent to him. Her name was Patience; she was hideous to European eyes, and she enhanced her ugliness by dressing in Parisian fashion. The old king was allowed a portion of his revenue, about 800*l.* a year. He was generous, always ready to respond to any appeal that might be made to him in St. Vincent, and it vexed him and wounded his dignity to find himself so poor. He would associate with none of the black or coloured people in the island, but he was gracious to the whites. He would invite little European children to drive with him in his hired carriage; the old black king, with his peacock's feather in his hat, would often go out thus attended. He treated these children with great kindness, and would give them sweets and cakes. To white ladies he was very courteous: 'De lady first,' he would say, and step back to make room for a white lady to pass on before him.

The days and months drifted by, full of heaviness to the exiled king. He was consumed by heart-burning, by home-sickness, by savage longings. He had adapted himself with great quickness to European customs, and to the European point of view. But the veneer that overlaid the savage in him was very thin. There was a story that in Opobo when any white man came to dine with him, he would, after dinner, send for any prisoners that he might chance to have, and he would order his 'Boys' to cut off their heads there and then in the presence of his guests. There was also at his court, it is said, a yearly Feast of the Breaking of Dishes (not, indeed, altogether obsolete in English households, but with a milder ritual), where horrible deeds were

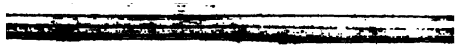
committed. In a raid in 1881 on the Qua Eboe country it is recorded that Ja-Ja made his children cut off the heads of some Qua Eboe children, so as to entitle the young princes to wear the eagle plume, which can be borne only by those who have slain an enemy; and after this there followed a grand banquet of human flesh. Such habits are not easily forgotten; not even a prolonged course of late dinners and of drives in flies could altogether quench the black king's instincts. A boy of his suite displeased Ja-Ja in St. Vincent. He contrived to have the lad secretly hung in chains to die —a lingering death that would last two or three days. But the police, who were watching Ja-Ja, had their suspicions aroused and rescued the boy. Once, when Ja-Ja gave some entertainment at his residence, the cook displeased him. He sent for her. 'You no please me,' he said; 'you make me much shame. If I were in my own country I would have your head cut off directly.' The cook wisely fled. The old man became dissatisfied with all his family and his suite during his exile, and he told them, a little too frankly perhaps, that they should all have their heads cut off when he returned home. At last, after Ja-Ja had eaten his heart for two miserable years, he was set free, and a ship was ordered to carry him to West Africa. His family and suite waited until the moment came for Ja-Ja to leave St. Vincent, and then they fled. But Patience had left her trunks behind, and Ja-Ja, as a last revenge, ordered that these should be taken on board with him. After a while his mind misgave him. He caused the boxes to be opened, and found them filled—not with Patience's smart clothes, but with stones. The old man's release came too late; his heart had been broken by captivity, and as the ship neared Madeira Ja-Ja died.

Such is the story of Ja-Ja the king, recalling vaguely the story of another and infinitely greater adventurer, who, after setting Europe aflame, died deposed, an exile, and broken-hearted, in a little island washed by summer seas. The scale of each of the two lives was different, yet the restless

ambition, the pride, the heart of the bird of prey beating itself to death against the wires of the cage—these were the same.

The little boy in the mango-tree had ceased his piping, and darkness, together with a great desolation, had descended upon the earth and sea. The crickets chirped in a long, shrill, monotonous chorus, and the night wind from the mountains stirred the fringed leaves of the palm-trees with a sharp, sibilant noise. Over all was arched the wide, calm, dark sky, framing with its background of unknown depth the restless world of land and waters, the human comedies and tragedies, and the human dust of the actors when the play is over.

Fugitive Pieces



SOME LEAVES FROM A PICTURE-BOOK

To-day is a soft grey day in February. The snowdrops are out in the woods, and the honeysuckle and elder bushes have already put forth tender shoots. I have taken my sewing to the window-seat,

> 'Whence you have that pleasant view
> Of those well-known woods and pastures
> And that unknown streak of blue.'

And I am letting my mind wander where it will, turning over old recollections, as you might turn over the pages of a picture-book. The first scene that rises before me is Madeira; the white houses running up the steep side of the mountain that rises stiffly out of the violet sea flaked with foam. The sun is shining on the fertile gardens and the tiny plots of wheat, on the peach trees pink with blossom, on the walls overgrown with brilliant purple and orange creepers, and on the women in their cotton gowns and bright kerchiefs who are washing clothes in the levadas. The bullock-cars, harnessed to patient mild-eyed oxen, are slowly creeping along the paved roads, and there is a long train of mules laden with packs, winding up one of the streets of Funchal. There is a villa, a Quinta as they call them in Madeira, on a cliff above the sea with a tangled garden round it, full of lemon and orange bushes sweet with blossom, tall judas trees covered with purple bean-shaped flowers, tea-roses, mauve wistaria, and dark green myrtles. You can hear the waves lapping on the rocks below, and in

the evening the air is full of the penetrating scent of the incense trees, and the sea gleams like silver in the moonlight. This house is inhabited by a Russian Prince—young and rich, with everything life could offer him, except the two best things, health and affection. He is only 16, and is dying of consumption. His sister, the only relation he has in the world, is in Russia, and the poor boy is dying far from home and among strangers. He is slight and thin, with a flat forehead and high cheek-bones, and large dark mournful eyes. The only pleasure he has is in music. He loves to listen for hours with his patient hands folded, and his sad eyes looking out over the sea, to the wailing of a violin. Once he used to play himself. Now he is forbidden to do so by the doctors, and his violin and bow are wrapped in silk, and put away out of his sight. They say he cried passionately when he bid them good-bye. He will never look at them any more. Hush! his tutor is playing to him now—wild melancholy airs that take the boy back from this narrow world of sunshine and wealth of colour, to the monotony and breadth of the steppes. Miles of land and sea lie between him and his home, and yet this cunning violin can bridge the space. I remember once, in Cornwall, as I was walking down a steep road edged by feathery tamarisk that shut out all view except the soft blue sky overhead, and the green sea at the end of the lane, there came along a little cabin boy whistling as he went the tune of:

'A North-country lass
Up to London did pass,
Although with her nature it did not agree,
Which made her repent
And full often lament,
Still wishing again in the North for to be.'

The north country lad had brought the air with him, and had carried it from one end of England to the other—and very strangely pathetic are the songs of home 'in a strange land.'

The doctors say that the little Prince can live until the autumn. When the summer comes he will move up to Commarcia, high above the glittering sea, where the fishermen in their picturesque boats float about all through the summer nights, singing to the bright-coloured fish, who come to listen, and then are caught—like many imprudent people have been, before and since the days of Odysseus—and eaten.

The next picture that I recall is a little cathedral town in North Wales. It was heavy July weather. Behind me rose hills covered with trees that wore the crude deep green of late summer; and beyond, the clear peaks of distant mountains stood out against the dull sky. The green sea at my feet was idly rolling little waves on the grey shore, and clouds tawny with thunder lay along the rim of the horizon. I entered the cathedral. It was a long low building without any striking beauty, but strangely cool and quiet. Presently the thunder began to growl and crash over head; and there came an ominous calm, as a sudden blackness gathered round us. Then I heard the clear sweet voice of a chorister, breaking the silence and rising from the dark depths of the chancel, as it were from the deep of the sea. 'Oh for the wings, the wings of a dove!' sang the boy, and the pure high notes seemed to bound like the flight of a bird through the open air. The cloud broke, and torrents of rain beat down on the cathedral roof, but above the noise of the storm rose the boyish tones: 'Then would I be at rest.' It was as if some wild bird, beaten and drenched by the tempest in the world without, had sought sanctuary here, and had found a refuge within the silent walls.

When I left the cathedral, the storm had spent itself, and the sun was shining; fresh winds from the sea were running riot in the trees, scattering glittering drops from the leaves, which had been washed clean from their dust and grime. The crisp, curly waves were white with foam, and far away I saw for the first time the tender outlines of a tiny purple island.

The scene changes—changes completely—and I see a comfortable little manor-house some five or six miles from a country town. To-night is the night of the Hunt Ball, and Kitty is going to it. She is dressing now—in white with snowdrops in her dress and hair, and her best gold locket and chain round her throat. It will be her first ball, and she is in a flutter of delight. Her feet, encased in a new pair of satin shoes, are surreptitiously dancing under the toilette-table all the time her aunt's maid is doing her hair. Presently she is ready, and the fly is at the door, and the girl goes tripping down the oak staircase behind her aunt—stopping just for half a second before the tarnished old mirror in its gilded frame; then, away! over the country roads where tracts of mud alternate with tracts of stone. The moon is shining on the silent fields, on the pools in the moor, and on the solemn-looking fir-trees. The water shimmers like quicksilver, and the tops of the dark trees wear a nimbus of pure, cold light. Now they drive through a village; there are bright lights shining from within the diamond panes, and as the fly passes, some heads—you can see their dark shadows—press against the glass, to catch a glimpse of the ladies who are driving by. Kitty sees it all, and thinks it all delightful, and Aunt Emily leans back in her corner and watches the girl with a kind smile. The carriage rattles through the paved streets of the little country town, and stops at the Public Rooms, and Kitty is trembling with expectation. She walks slowly through the avenue of people who stand there to see the gentlefolk in their fine clothes; for Kitty is a good-natured little soul and would wish everybody to participate in the joy of a new tulle frock, a white cloak trimmed with soft swansdown, and the prettiest little shoes you ever saw. I do not think I need trouble to describe her; she is like nine English girls out of ten—bright-eyed, with fresh rosy cheeks and brown hair. I do not fancy that her features or her figure are admirable; but, after all, what can be prettier or more pleasing than youth and good-humour at its first ball? The bright lights

in the ball-room dazzle the little maiden. She scarcely notices the decorations of evergreens (with those tasteful pink and blue paper roses) ; nor the musicians seated in the gallery above ; nor the smart party from Hudsdon that Lady Flora has brought over. The music has begun to play, and Kitty feels it thrill through and through her, and is seized by a dreadful idea that no one will ask her to dance. But presently up comes fat old Mr. Beadon and engages her as his partner—and, in her fear of being left out, he seems to her a ministering angel. The little shoes dance all night, quadrilles, country dances, waltzes, and polkas. There is no lack of partners, and each partner seems more delightful than the last ; the hours fly—it is half-past three, and the dancers are leaving. Aunt Emily is almost slumbering on her bench, and really does fall asleep directly she gets into the fly—it is wonderful how apathetic these middle-aged people are—while Kitty, the music still running in her head, is wide awake, and so sorry that the ball is over. She undresses slowly in her little room, and goes over and over again her happy evening, and she tosses up and down in her little white bed, until the pale winter dawn begins to shine in the dark east. Ah me ! that is twelve long years ago. Kitty married the curate of Wilscombe two years after, and now she has six little children to clothe and feed, on scanty means. The roses have faded out of her cheeks, and as to dancing—why, her feet have quite enough to do as it is, running about after the children to keep them out of mischief. Things and people change so quickly, and the time for play is soon over.

I put my work down, as this picture faded away, and I looked out of the window, on the winter sunset, the faint glow of pink and orange in the west, on the sheep feeding in the quiet pastures, on the rooks flying home to bed, across the tranquil sky. There were groups of children on the winding road, little ones who had dawdled on their way from school, and who were now trotting along, hand in hand, with their empty luncheon-baskets on their arms

They stop for one moment to say something in passing to the old man who breaks stones. He too is on his way homeward, limping stiffly, with his old piece of sacking on his shoulders, that serves as a great coat on wet days. The whole octave of life lies between him and those little children ; he has nearly done with toil and sleep, and with fine and rainy weather, while they are starting on their journey, and have a long way to go, many dreams to dream and many realities to face. God bless them and keep them on their way !

THE VICEREGAL LODGE[1]

Now that this time is coming to an end, I must, in common gratitude, write of it as I have found it. To me it will always be enchanted ground, and presently, like the Garden of Eden, it will be gathered up by the four corners into Heaven. I shall always think of it as it was in summer, the long rambling white house with the great central block and pillars, the sentries walking up and down, the terrace brilliant with scarlet geraniums and yellow calceolarias, the dark Irish yews, and the green space of park bounded by the 'pearly hills,' delicate and diaphanous as a dream, melting into the sky. It is winter now, and the great elm avenue by the polo-ground is leafless; the trees are 'bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.' Yesterday W. and I were walking in the soft twilight, over the great green stretch of the fifteen-acre, and through the wide lonely glades we saw the bare elms standing out black against the translucent amber sky, and thought how strangely all the pleasant days, and the pretty idle play, and the lovely summer weather, had all gone by together. 'This is a place,' says E., 'where one thinks there must always be perfect moonlight nights, and nightingales singing, and roses, and majors.' How many hundreds of lives have passed in and out of this Viceregal house; how many stories and episodes! If the elms in Lord Chesterfield's avenue could speak, they might tell of a great many hopes, and a great many heartaches, all

[1] During the Lord Lieutenancy of the Earl of Carnarvon in 1885.

of which have crumbled, or are crumbling, fast into the dust of ages.

I can never forget our departure: the sleepless night, the hurry and stir in the soft black morning, the sentries changing guard (the last time that I should see or hear them), the interminable drive through the park, the gas lamps quivering and flickering in the darkness that was now melting away. And the beautiful Irish hills, and the shipping standing out against an aureole of orange, a flaming streak of transparent colour, that lay along the edge of the quiet sky, as we steamed across the grey waters, and as we watched the dawn of the first of a new order of days.

December 18, 1885.

ANGELS UNAWARES

We were once debating the question whether angels still came down on earth and paid men and women visits. One of our party doubted it. Such things, he said, were only in apostolic days. Another admitted the possibility, but urged the fact that angelic visits were proverbially 'few and far between.' Then an old lady of great experience, who had known the world for some five-and-seventy years or more, answered that 'one might still entertain angels unawares, but that the whole point of it lay in the unawariness.'

This same old lady, although far from rich, certainly gave the angels every opportunity of enjoying her hospitality. At each meal there was an extra chair set, both in the kitchen and in the parlour, 'a chair for the angel,' and many poor and hungry people (angels or otherwise) profited by the custom. And when finally it came to be this old lady's turn to be entertained herself by the angels, her quiet little house was thronged by poor people with red eyes and sad hearts, who were only too eager to tell you a thousand and one stories of her kindness. She was like Dorcas, they said, 'full of good works and alms deeds *which she did*,' a very uncommon characteristic in these bad times when so many people are full of good deeds which they do not do.

I have long ago seen how right this old lady was in saying that 'the whole point lay in the unawariness,' for I once mistook some one for an angel who was a very different person, and after entertaining him as an angelic visitor found out that he had hired the wings and the dress and the

beatific smile—the whole costume, in fact—from Messrs. Nathan, or from some such fancy-dress warehouse. After that I gave up expecting angel-guests, and, to my grief and shame, the first time one called upon me I only saw in him a commonplace middle-aged gentleman, with very little hair, and a husky voice that seemed to come from far away, and which always gave me a nervous inclination to clear my throat. He was very worthy, but quite a bore, people said, and I agreed with them. He used to talk away gently for hours, and no one ever took the trouble to listen or to make out what it was all about. Now that he is changed 'from a toy to a relic, and seen through the crystal of tears,' I try to recall some of his utterances. But either my memory fails me or else he never did say anything remarkable. I remember his telling me—he was very fond of incontrovertible facts—that it is unwise to sit in wet shoes, that 'five o'clock tea is quite an institution with ladies,' and that—this cautiously, and suggested by a fierce political argument raging around us—'there are two sides to every question.' I also remember, to my everlasting regret, six little execrable puns and seven small jokes which he made, and at which I in my pride and my hardness of heart refused even to smile. Ah! is there any one in the wide world who can look back on the past years with an easy heart? As for me, a thousand and one little opportunities I have missed rise up and reproach me as I think of it; little unkindnesses and ungracious acts where I might instead have given pleasure, foolish omissions and oversights, trifling acts of neglect. They are small enough, it is true, but—and here lies the sting of it—I can never make amends for the greatest or for the least of them. My chance of doing service to that kindly heart is gone for ever. The most I can do is to lay a handful of quick-fading flowers on the cold slab of stone.

There is a Portuguese story of a man who, sitting alone in the twilight, is told that the avenging angel waits on his threshold to speak with him. He expects to see the angel of death, with the two-edged and flaming sword, when lo!

he sees instead the tear-stained face and gentle reproachful eyes of the woman who loved him, and whom he wronged years ago, standing there with her thin wasted hands full of the 'saudades' and the 'cuidados' (scabious and marigolds), and the scented lemon-blossom they used to gather together on the sunny hills. But the look in her eyes stays by him and haunts him ever after; and therein lies his punishment.

I was not the only person who failed to recognise this angel I am speaking of. It is true that poor and old people, little children, and cats and dogs, all loved him. But then a little kindness goes a long way with such as these; they do not require talent or wit. Yes, we all said, he is a worthy man, but a great bore. Then came his death; a death so noble, so unselfish, so devoted, that we, his critics, scarcely dared lift our eyes from the ground for shame. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And those who stood round this dying man's bed saw that this great love which he bore to his fellow-men, and which had made him count his life as nothing in the scale, supported him in all the anguish of his suffering, and lighted him through 'the dark valley of the shadow of death.'

There is a poem of Mrs. Barrett Browning's called 'Matty,' on the death of a little girl of thirteen, where the mother complains that her darling who found this earth 'a green and easy world,'

> 'room to play,
> Though one's hair might get uncurled
> At the far end of the day,'

is suddenly lifted by death to a world beyond all human knowledge. The child whom so lately she played with, and kissed, and praised, and blamed, is now wiser than any living creature. And the poor mother ends with,

> 'Give us Michael with the sword
> Rather than such angels, Lord.'

So it was with us. We could not bear to remember how

our eyes had been holden, and how we had never as much as seen the tiniest feather sprouting on this angel's shoulder till he had spread his wings and flown away miles over our heads.

The other angel I met was the wife of a navvy. She was very stout, with the figure of a pillow-case. Her face was the colour of bricks, and her dust-coloured hair was towzled like a door-mat, and twisted round two rusty hair-pins. Her name was Mrs. Sairey Jackson. Regarding her as an angel (as indeed I now do) her disguise was very perfect. I went into her wooden hut to ask whether any of the navvies who lodged there would care to have any letters written for them. The angel replied with a surly voice that they wanted nobody meddling with them that she knew of, and she waved her broom towards the door as a delicate hint that she would not detain me further. But I was bent on softening her. A grimy baby was seated on a heap of cinders, gently rubbing a piece of bread-and-butter into them, with the purpose, doubtless, of improving the flavour. I made advances to this epicure which he received benignly, and this won the angel's heart. 'There niver was sich a one as Charley,' she said, 'to make friends with strangers, pretty dear!' And after that I knew I had the *entrée* to the hut.

One Sunday evening I was met close to the huts by a navvy, who asked me whether I had heard of last night's accident. It appeared that there had been a landslip on the new line, and that two men had been killed. One was single, but the other left a wife and six children, and, said the man, 'the widder and the poor fam'ly is there,' pointing to the hut, 'stopping along of Sairey Jackson.'

I felt uncertain whether my presence would be a comfort or no, but I acted on an impulse and tapped at the door, which was opened to me. About ten men, seated on benches, were smoking round the fire. They were not talking, but sat there in silence, with an expression of commiseration on their weather-beaten faces.

'Do you think I had better go into the other room and see the poor widow?' I asked, shyly.

There was no answer for a moment, and then the biggest navvy of the party, who was evidently their spokesman, said encouragingly—

'Go in, miss, go in. You little women knows best what to say on 'casions like these.'

So I went in. The poor little room was dimly lit by one tallow candle stuck in a bottle. The woman herself, sobbing as though her heart would break, sat on the only chair. The floor was alive with children. A confused heap of little heads and arms and legs lay intertwined on a straw pallet in one corner. Two little girls were nursing babies almost as big as themselves, and one child sat alone in a retired spot howling, apparently for the mere sake of howling. Mrs. Jackson was kneeling beside the poor widow, and looked up as I entered. I thought I had never seen any face so transfigured, so beautiful, in its look of tenderness and pity. 'Don't'ee, my dear, don't'ee take on so,' and she soothed her like a little child, with a tact and sympathy which could, so I supposed, only be the outcome of a life-long affection and knowledge.

When I left the hut I called Mrs. Jackson aside to ask how I could best help the poor widow.

'Well, miss,' she answered, 'she's not got a penny to turn to now. But they'll surely make a collection for she down the line. And she and her fam'ly shall have a bite and sup along of Tom and me till she knows a little what to be up to.'

'She is your sister, is she?' I asked, for I could not but think there must be some relationship, or at least some very old friendship, between the two women.

Mrs. Jackson laughed. 'Bless you, miss, I never set eyes on she till last night. But,' she added, apologetically, 'you see one must do sum'at for them as is in trouble and don't know where to turn.'

I bade her good-bye, and walked home across the quiet

moonlit common and under the red October beeches, with my heart full of all I had seen and heard. And it seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that I shall never know a quarter of all the goodness and kindness and love that are hidden away in the out-of-the-way corners of this strange world.

A WANDERER

I LONG and crave to be a gipsy through all the summer months; then I would wander, sometimes through the pure green of hazel copses, where bluebells, star-wort, purple orchids, and spurge would make a shimmer of colour at my feet, where nightingales sing day and night; sometimes over wide downs, dotted with bushes of aromatic juniper, purple with wild thyme and orange with lady's slipper, where sweet wild winds blow through pine woods, where the ground is yellow with their last year's needles, and where there are strange subtle scents of rosin, and of gum, and of the juice and heart's blood of trees; through lush water-meadows, green with rich herbage, and gold with buttercups, where the placid brown-eyed cattle feed, and all the while the cuckoo, a vagrant like myself, is calling his name through the depth and breadth of the dear green earth. Sometimes I would pause in the valleys, and watch the cool murmuring rivers running through beds of tall reeds, of yellow flags, of faint-scented meadow-sweet, and blue forget-me-nots with pink buds and yellow eyes, pure crystal waters washing the hanging grasses, and floating the leaves of the frog-bit, and of the buck-bean, whose delicate flower looks like white muslin.

But far behind me I would leave the noise and business of cities, and the trouble and heart-searching of right and wrong, and be alone in the fresh free space, with blue distances before me, and all the pretty sights, and all the dearly-loved sounds in God's world to keep me company.

No weather should daunt me, for, after fine weather, I like the wet, and would walk for pleasure through the soft summer rain, that patters down on the tender young leaves, and draws a smell of growth and life, as the moisture is sucked in, to nourish the brown roots down below.

COMMON-PLACE PERSONS

I AM a common-place person, and live with common-place people. It is my object, and the object of my friends, to be as like the rest of the world as possible. It would indeed be a fearful thing if our bonnets were not exactly what all other bonnets are, and ought to be ; if our visiting cards were not all printed after the same fashion ; if our customs were not those of the genteel world. We are bound with innumerable chains of conventionality, and we are proud of our fetters. Our names are not merely Brown, Jones, and Robinson ; some few among us belong to the highest circles. We do not pretend to boast of poets, or artists, or historians, among our number : we are merely, at the most, 'well-read,' or we have perhaps 'literary tastes' ; I think we rarely go beyond this. But what we pride ourselves on is our gentility. We thank heaven that we are not as other men are ; that we are highly respectable Pharisees, who pay their pew-rent, and do not come empty-handed to church on Hospital Sunday. There is one family in particular, whom I will choose to represent the great and influential body of common-place people ; working, dull, heavy people ; to whom, after death, we put up epitaphs recording their inestimable qualities, their transcendent virtues, and our irreparable loss. The head of the family is short, stout, and elderly. He is chiefly remarkable for his activity in county business, and was lately presented with a testimonial of his merits. He attends innumerable committees, and is one of those persons who insist on talking the whole time, and on whom

arguments have no effect; he starts with a preconceived idea, which he will never give up. Mamma is stout, with a good-humoured face, though at times it wears a care-worn expression. I think she generally dresses in two shades of purple, and wears a large watch-chain. What she has gone though with servants and governesses no one knows; and it is on these topics, together with a minute account of the measles and whooping cough, and a description of the dreadful time when Tom poked a pea down his ear, and it couldn't be got up again, that she discourses in a mysterious whisper for the edification of the ladies in the drawing-room after dinner. She generally is either looking out for a cook (papa is very particular about his dinner) or has a housemaid to recommend. She has many children; there are Blanche, and Matilda, and Amy, who are already out, and three little girls in brown-hollands, with their hair hanging down in pig-tails, still in the recesses of a school-room, where they seem to practise during the whole live-long day on the piano-forte; scales, five-finger exercises, and such tunes as 'My Cottage in the Wood,' Weber's last Waltz, and 'Trab, Trab,' with indifferent success. Blanche and Matilda are both plain and sensible-looking. Amy has the pink and white complexion, hazel eyes, and brown hair of a common-place beauty. Each of these young ladies can boast an accomplishment; they are very ready to be amused, and are amiable and obliging; they are usually dressed alike, either in white, or in pink, or blue.

There is a brother, who is constantly failing in competitive examinations, and two school-boys.

DEVONSHIRE

ONCE I rode in the month of April through the oak coppices that clothe the flanks of Devonshire hills, to the heights, whence I could see the green and pleasant valley stretching away on either side to the foot of soft purple hills. Far below me the eager brawling river was winding through rich lush meadows, yellow with daffodils, where red kine were feeding, and where all the tepid air was sweet with the gums and juices of budding hedgerows, and the smell of blossoming palms.

I watched the shadows flitting over pasture and woodland, and heard the birds calling to each other, hidden in larches which had just put down their green dresses and pink buttons, and I wished in my heart that the sun might once more stand still in the heavens as it did over the Valley of Ajalon, and that I might store up all the pleasant sights and sounds, wherewith, like Wordsworth, to make holiday in my heart on dull and dreary days.

Another day I call to mind in the month of November, when the rain fell in dull torrents, and my brother and I mounted our horses, and galloped through the dank rotting woods, where the dying leaves were filling the heavy air with the smell of decay, and the taint of corruption, far away, to the grey and yellow moors.

Overheard there was not a break in the lowering sky. The dark blue hills seemed close upon us, and the little rivers in the narrow valleys were brimming over with their turbid yellow waters. As we rode along the desolate high-

way, we came to a little shed by the side of the road, where there used to be a toll-bar. In the shed we caught sight of the glimmer of a bright red shawl, and as we drew nearer we saw a tall young woman with the sweet, placid, fresh face, the pretty wavy hair, star-like eyes, and large but kindly mouth, that mark so many Devonshire girls. Thinking that she collected the tolls, we reined in our horses, and asked her what she wanted. She looked shyly at us, and then answered in her high-pitched wailing Devonshire voice: 'I be waiting for some mun.'

As I write, I seem to see again the bare open moors, with their cheerless pools of dark water, and the sallow patches of rain, the dreary road, and the bright sweet face of the girl wrapped in her brilliant shawl, waiting for her sweetheart; the only bit of life and colour in the grey wet landscape.

VILLA CAREGGI

THE old villa, bearing none of the signs of age, stands in a neglected deserted garden, a wilderness of long grasses, and blossoming shrubs. There is a broken fountain in the centre, and above this, in a pink chestnut tree, the nightingales sing all through the dreamy sunny days and clear moonlight nights. The air is full of the scent of the wistaria which covers the walls with sprays of soft mauve flowers; there are on the other side the canary-coloured flower which the Italians love, little round fluffy balls of fragrant yellow on prickly stems; and in the depth of the wilderness bushes of white blossoms, smelling as little white may blossoms smell; a sweet and heavy sleepy smell. Beyond the garden are green strips of young wheat, and orchards of mulberry trees in delicate leaf, and grey fig-trees still bare in the sunshine; and beyond them the beautiful city lying in a fold of the hills, and the Arno, shining like silver ribbon in the light; and then beyond that the stately mountains fringing the wide serene Italian sky.

Within the court there is the well down which Lorenzo de Medici's doctor was flung, on the suspicion of having poisoned his master; and upstairs is the room and bed in which Lorenzo died; the bed by which Savonarola stood and asked him to give back to Florence her liberty. Lorenzo, the story says, turned his face to the wall without a word, and Savonarola left him to die unabsolved.

TRAMPS

YESTERDAY, in mid-Atlantic, I saw a spray of orange sea-weed tossing on the purple water. It was Sargasso weed, which has no root, but grows from every point, for ever floating in summer seas. In it I recognised a member of a family most familiar to me. It is a tramp, more attractive perhaps than those we are familiar with, who haunt our back doors, and tell us with a whine that food has not passed their lips for twenty-four hours, but nevertheless it belongs to the same moral class. I have heard of a poor old man who had never slept in a bed in his life ; a dry ditch, or a barn, or under the lee of a haystack, these had been his resting-places. He declared that it would kill him to be put into a bed. But he fell ill ; and was taken, too ill to resist, into the workhouse infirmary. And there, when he was put into a bed, as he always said he should, he died. The race of people who attach themselves passionately to some spot of earth, who suffer cruelly from nostalgia when away from home, find it hard to understand the tramps ; the gipsies, the cuckoos, the Sargasso weed, and all the tribe of rovers.

KING'S HOUSE, JAMAICA

It had been sultry at midday, black clouds came up the sky, and it rained heavily; tropical rain in floods. The macaws, three red ones and a beautiful blue and yellow one, sat exultant on the bamboo and croton bushes that were bending with the weight of the water, and flapped their wings, and shook out their brilliant feathers so as to let the rain run through them; one of them lighted on the lawn and dragged himself with wide-spread scarlet pinions on the soaking grass. Presently the clouds floated or spent themselves, and it cleared into a soft grey afternoon like an English afternoon in spring. We drove along the roads that were fringed with mango and banana into the mountains; the air was full of the soft penetrating scent of the logwood now covered with yellow blossom; a little gentle breeze lifted the wet leaves, and rustled the palms; the streams were filled, and brown water poured foaming over rocks with the sound of far-off Devonshire rivers. There was an echo of home in the air, a vague suggestion of England.

A CHILD'S STORY

My sister Selina and I were sitting disconsolate in our play-room, watching the rain-drops dribbling down the window-pane. Outside the wild summer wind was shaking the wet from the lilac bushes, and sweeping over the yellow laburnums.

'What shall we play at, Selly?' I asked wearily, for the hundredth time that afternoon, and as I spoke I flattened my little nose, out of which it seemed to me the damp had taken all the stiffness, against the glass. 'Shall we marry our dolls, and have a grand wedding?'

'No!' said Selina snappishly, 'I'm tired of weddings; and I won't play at illnesses either. My doll has had measles and mumps, and heart-disease and cholera, and that's quite enough.'

I thought, a little bitterly, that my doll had been vaccinated not so very long ago. When Aunt Eleanor came to pay us a visit, she brought us each a beautiful wax doll. Selina let hers fall and bruised its cheek; and she looked with jealous eyes on mine. 'I am sorry to tell you,' says Selly, 'that I see your dolly is sickening for smallpox or something dreadful, and if you don't have her vaccinated she will be marked all over like Miss Ingram!' I enquired in great alarm, where I could have her vaccinated. 'Well,' said Selina deliberately, 'I could do it for you—and that wouldn't be so expensive as sending for Dr. White.' I thanked her, and gave my doll to her for the operation, not however without some hesitation, for there was something

suspicious in Selly's manner. She had no sooner seized my precious Eleonora Martha (her names were a delicate compliment to my aunt and to the woman at the lodge who fed my bantams) than she banged my child's innocent face against a stone. 'There! your horrid doll is vaccinated now!'

But as I was of a forgiving nature (nurse used to say children were either for giving or for grabbing), I did not allude to by-gone things on this occasion.

'Shall we play at being sick?' I enquired, looking round me cautiously first to see whether Miss Ingram, our governess, was within hearing. For this favourite game of ours was strictly forbidden. 'It is most unlady-like,' Miss Ingram used to say. 'No other family would dream of playing such indelicate games.' But Selina, who was very cross that afternoon, suddenly veered round to our governess' view of the matter. 'I think you are a very nasty little girl,' she said with righteous wrath, 'and I'm very glad I'm not like you. You are always choosing some horrid game.'

I turned once more wearily to the window, in hopes of finding something new. The rain was still falling fast on the fresh green leaves, and the wind was still shaking the wet shrubs. The thrushes were busy with the worms; and from time to time one flew past our window with a wriggling victim in his beak. Suddenly I spied, coming up the gravel walk, our big brother Tom with his gun on his shoulder, and his little rough-haired terrier limping behind him. I tapped on the window and called to him, 'Have you shot many rooks? And what's the matter with Spice? He is quite lame.'

'He caught his leg in the wire getting through a fence,' Tom shouted back. 'I'll bring him upstairs, and you can look after him.' In a few minutes the play-room door opened, and Spice walked in. 'He's in a fearful mess, mud all over,' said Tom. But I cared nothing for that.

'Oh, my loving Spice!' I cried, 'Oh, my darlingest dog!' and I took the poor little dirty thing in my arms, and

kissed him again and again. I tied up the bad leg tenderly with my pocket-handkerchief—Spice licking my hands all the time—and walked up and down the room with him, as I had seen nurse do with baby.

'Why don't you put him down on the mat?' asked Selly; 'he would be quite comfy there—and Miss Ingram will scold you dreadfully, you are in such a nasty mess.'

It was quite true; I was very dirty, and my pinafore, which had been clean that afternoon, was now mud all over.

'I can't put dearie Spice down on the mat,' I said piteously, 'because it is so hard for him. What can I do?' And then a bright idea, as I thought, occurred to me. 'I'll put him to bed.' So I slipped out of the play-room, and into our bed-room, where, as it was Saturday night, Caroline had put clean sheets on our little cots. I climbed up on a chair, and carefully laid Spice in my crib, with his dirty shaggy little head on my pillow. I covered him up gently, and kissed him, and told him to go to sleep like a dear good dog. Then I took a dripping sponge, and tried to wash out the stains on my pinafore, but it only seemed to make the matter worse. Presently I heard the tea-bell ring. I ran down to the school-room, and found Selina and Miss Ingram and my brother George at the tea-table. George was saying grace, and as usual was saying it wrong. He never could remember if he had, or had not, 'received' anything. 'For what we have received' he was beginning. Miss Ingram scolded him. I was afraid she would notice my soiled pinafore, but luckily she did not. I sat next to George. I always used to eat his crusts for him, as his little teeth could not get through them. Miss Ingram was very strict about the crusts, and if they were not all eaten up she would put them by in the cupboard, and bring them out again at the next meal, when they would be harder than ever. George used to do me a good turn, on his side, by eating up all the fat that I left at dinner. I cannot say that George's behaviour at meals was praiseworthy. He used to lick all the butter or jam off his bread, and then look

reproachfully at it because it was bare. He often tipped up his plate into his lap, and more often still upset his mug over his neighbours; and worst of all the carpet beneath his chair after meals looked as if a pig had been dining there; it was besmattered with crumbs all round. He was only five years old, but I suppose better things might have been expected of him. 'I'm sure it is quite dreadful to live with such horrid children as George and Annie,' said Miss Ingram as she left the tea-table. 'If it were not for Selina, I really shouldn't stay another day here.'

'I wish her wouldn't!' whispered George to me. He and I ran off together to look at Spice, who was sleeping very comfortably in my crib; and then we went to the play-room, and played at 'House' until bed-time. We built our house with chairs roofed over with the tail of the curtain, and we pretended to be a little old man and woman and called each other Peter and Sarah. The time passed quickly, and when nurse came to fetch George, and Caroline came for me, we were both very sorry to go. I had quite forgotten Spice, who was sleeping sweetly where I had left him, and Caroline did not see him until just as she was going to put me into my crib. She gave a scream and started back—and then she seized Spice by two of his legs—the first two that came to hand, and one was the bad leg—and flung him out of the bed. 'You good-for-nothing dirty old dog, get out!' she cried. I howled in my despair.

'Oh don't, don't, Caroline, don't. It wasn't Spice's fault. I put him to bed there. And you'll hurt his leg. Oh I hate you, I hate you!'

'You're a very naughty onladylike little girl, Miss Annie, and how dare you put Spice on the clean sheets?' And she turned from Spice—who was making the best of his escape on three legs—to me and shook me until the room seemed to dance before my eyes. I caught a glimpse of George in his night-gown, with his white face and round dark eyes, peeping through the half-opened door through which

Spice had just fled howling. He had heard the noise of the battle from his bed in the nursery, and had slipped in to see what was going on. He had not been there more than a few seconds when nurse arrived. 'Master George, my precious lamb, you'll catch your death of cold! Come back to bed, my Chicken-Pie!' Caroline let me go when she saw nurse.

'What do you mean by making Miss Annie cry?' cried nurse. 'I tell you I won't have it.' And she shook her finger at Caroline, who went off muttering.

I did not want to go to sleep that evening, but lay awake crying over Spice's misfortunes. I took a peep at Caroline, just before I settled down in my cot, and that peep was not re-assuring. She was whisking up and down the room, putting away our week-day clothes, and I saw that her face looked very red and furious. I felt relieved when she was gone, and I was left alone with Selly in the soft quiet twilight—the dull evening light crept through a chink in the shutters and the friendly night-light was swimming about in its basin. I was sobbing myself gently to sleep when I heard a well-known step on the stairs. I sat up, and called 'Tom! dear Tom! Do come and see me.' Selly muttered something about my disturbing her, and then went to sleep again. The door opened and Tom came in. 'Hullo! why, what's the matter with you, Annie? crying again?'

I threw my arms round his neck and told him all my story. He laughed and then comforted me in his rough kindly way.

'Spice is all right. He's asleep in the hall. Don't you trouble yourself about him. Dry your eyes, and don't let us have any more howling.'

'Wrap me up in the shawl and carry me down the long corridor—just once!' I pleaded.

Tom bundled the big grey shawl, which had Nursery marked upon it in red letters, round me and lifted me up. He was so tall and so strong nothing even seemed a trouble to him. I loved the sense of security which his strong arms

gave me. He carried me down the nursery stairs to the long dusky corridor, that looked strange and deserted in the waning light. I stopped him when we came to the window at the end. It was open, and we both of us looked out. It had ceased raining, and the air was full of the sweet smell of the moist earth and of the tender green. The bats were whirling to and fro and crying out every now and again in their shrill sad little voices. As we stood watching them a great white owl floated heavily down from a big elm, and looked solemnly around. There were three little rabbits feeding on the lawn, and two of them began to play like kittens. I could have stayed there and watched them for ever, I thought, but Tom said I should catch cold; and at the sound of his voice the rabbits scudded off into the lilac bushes, and the owl, winking and blinking, sailed away in the air again. Tom carried me back and laid me down gently in my cot. 'Tom!' I began again, 'Don't go. I haven't said my prayers.'

'Then you had better look sharp and do it,' he answered. 'Why didn't you do it before?'

'Because of the "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." I couldn't forgive Caroline for being so unkind to Spice.'

'Oh you can do it now,' responded Tom. 'There's nothing the matter with Spice.'

'Tom, don't go,' I entreated. 'Let me say them to you.'

I knelt down, and with my head leaning against Tom's shoulder I went through my whole religious repertory: the Lord's Prayer, the evening hymn, and the little prayer at the end, for 'Brothers and sister, and all we love.' Tom waited patiently till it was over and then was going away. But I stopped him.

'Just one little tiny prayer for Spice,' I urged.

'Oh, Spice doesn't want prayers!' he said discouragingly; 'nobody prays for dogs.'

I was much distressed. 'Then it is very unkind of

them,' I said, 'the dogs want it quite as much as any one else.'

So Tom submitted, and I prayed that Spice's leg might get quite well, and that he might be a good dog.

'I suppose,' I enquired mournfully, 'that it's no good praying that he may go to Heaven when he dies?'

Tom did not seem to think it would be of much use, either, so I lay down in my cot, made him kiss me, and feel asleep, comforted.

SECOND THOUGHTS

Neighbours.

I know some people who never fall upon their own feet, but always on those of their neighbours, and it seems to answer just as well.

'Take it as Good.'

In a copybook two hundred years old I found this maxim: 'Take it as good, and soe 'twill prove to thee.' It seems to me that this is the true philosopher's stone that turns all the dross of life into gold. 'Take it as good'—take the worries and the miseries, the contrarieties, the afflictions, the temptations even—take them all as good, and they will prove a mine of treasure.

Confidences.

The greatest number of confidences is made to the sympathetic people, not to the discreet ones. We generally make confidences for the same reason that a kettle boils over, because it cannot help it.

Limitations.

How unjust a thing it is to be angry with pigs because they have no wings, and with birds because they have no teeth! And yet that is a mistake that is often made, especially as regards books and authors. 'Why cannot Barrie write English stories?' or 'Why cannot the author of "Mademoiselle Ixe" write a novel in three volumes?' or 'Why does not Mary Wilkins give us a little variety, instead of these perpetual New England sketches?' cry these unreasonable people, not seeing that Barrie is nothing unless he be Scottish, that Lanoe Falconer's greatest charm lies in her brevity—never one word too much nor too few—and that the author of a 'Humble Romance' and of the 'New England Nun' excels in describing her own people.

The Sense of Smell.

There is one of the senses which I think we all agree is not sufficiently cultivated; and that is the sense of smell. Yet it can give intense pleasure. To me, a large part of the delights of the country is the variety of wholesome sweet odours; the breath of the cows; the smell of the newly-turned earth; the aroma of Scotch firs at sunset; the fragrance of fading leaves in autumnal woods. Do many people, I wonder, know how good the yellow and grey blossoms of the 'palm' willow smell? or that a few spikes of the wild daphne or spurge laurel, if you are careful not to bruise the stem or leaves, will fill a warm room with scent?

Latter-day Witches.

There is a charm about some people that amounts to magic. Mary Queen of Scots is an historical instance of what I mean. Although she has been dead for three hundred years, although there are scarcely two pictures of her that are alike, and many of them are not remarkable for beauty, although there seems to be pretty plain proof that she was not a good woman, yet the personality of Mary—the bewitching grace and attraction of the whole—holds its own, and, as Sainte-Beuve has pointed out, there are still people in love with her. They are to be found among all nations; a Russian Prince devoted his life to trying to prove her innocence. Indeed, it is never safe to speak ill of her; you never know where you may find one of her adherents. Mr. John Bright was among them; he would never allow a disrespectful word about her to pass. In life, to this day, we now and again come across some witch or some wizard, some privileged person to whom all things are forgiven because they possess this extraordinary charm. No one can say of what it consists; it neither belongs specially to beauty, nor to talent, nor yet to goodness—to this, least perhaps of all.

Squalor in Rich Houses.

There is a squalor in some lives which seems to me far worse than death; and this squalor is to be found as often—I had almost said *more* often—in rich houses as in poor ones. It is the squalor of incessant little jars and rubs, little misunderstandings and petty discontents. Yet these pitiful things, so mean and trifling in themselves, fill up the vacuum of some lives as completely as dust and fluff fill up the nooks and crannies of a deserted room. Among the poor the very struggle for existence will often drive away

this moral squalor ; and indeed there is nothing so effectual as wholesome honest work to give people cheerful, well-balanced minds. It is squalor such as I speak of that 'flaws the crystal' and gives a distorted air to the whole of life, and that makes some homes—beautiful prosperous homes—seem hateful. Far more endurable are the great afflictions that God sends, than these little miseries which we make for ourselves.

Cheap Contempt.

A lady who was having her house in London painted, overheard two workmen talking. They were speaking of the arrogant manner in which they and their class were often treated. 'Why,' said one, 'they actually call us the lower classes.' I repeated this story to an eminent scholar, who is also a leader and teacher of men. He was silent for a moment, and then said he had a piece of advice to offer, the outcome of his experience. 'Never use words that imply class distinctions.' Such words as 'flunkey,' 'little people'—by which elegant phrase is meant, I believe, people living on small means in little houses—'counter-jumpers,' and so on, always seem to me to betray vulgarity in those that use these terms. Nothing is so cheap as contempt. There are people who can never speak of a labourer but as 'Hodge,' or of a farm-lad but as a lout. I cannot believe that by doing so they either raise their own dignity or lower the dignity of those of whom they speak. We are constantly hearing how foolish it is for people to be ashamed of the class to which they belong, or of the labour by which they earn their bread. But as long as we use contemptuous and derogatory terms to denote these, there is surely some excuse for their mistaken shame.

Bother.

How hard to bear are the little annoyances of life! The easier the couch is, the more we feel the crumpled rose-leaves. A lady was staying once with the late Lord Tennyson; they were old friends, and she was accustomed to his delightfully varying moods, so that his maintaining a profound silence during the two days of her stay did not surprise her. He was apparently sunk in meditation. But as he put her into the carriage that was to take her away, he broke the silence by a weighty sentence, 'Good-bye,' he said, 'Good-bye. Bother is worse than care.' It was a great truth that he gave her as a parting gift, a truth which has been of real service to me ever since I heard the story. For 'bother,' which we mainly make for ourselves, need not exist. It is the 'rift in the lute' often enough, and makes lives, that ought to be prosperous, mere strings of fretful, weary days. 'Don't throw good worry away' is a piece of very sound advice.

'Next to the Bores comes the Bored.'

An artist once complained that his chief difficulty with his pupils was, not to teach them to draw, but to teach them to see what they were to draw. It is curious to watch how the old story of 'Eyes and no eyes' is repeated again and again. I suspect that what half the people who complain of being bored suffer from is want of observation. If you have the faculty of observation—and like all faculties it improves with use—you will always be well amused. The world then becomes a great show, where there is no extra charge for seats. An hour at a railway station is a feast. You never find anybody dull, because everybody interests you. 'My favourite sport,' says one of these happy people, 'is

stalking the human.' And to those to whom the poor human—with his load of sins and mistakes upon his back, creeping uphill, or indeed slipping downhill—is a pain, and not a pleasure, there is the great world of birds and beasts—the clouds and the sky that are always varying, the plants springing and decaying, the earth that is one great picture-book, with no two pictures the same.

Men and Children.

People say that nowadays women care much less—and men care much more—for children than they did. It would be a pity, were it really the case, that women should forsake their old love; a pity for the coming generation, and a still greater pity for the women themselves. But as far as men are concerned, I believe myself that they have always been fond of children, only until lately it has not been the fashion to say so. I do not suppose that they ever cared for tiresome spoilt children; it must be owned that these are not an attractive race at any time, and it is only the people who spoil them that have a tenderness for the poor little wretches. But the average man, I think, has always been fond of the average child. And as I write I remember a pretty story told me by a friend, of the time when she was a child, and used to go to children's parties in London, and the Duke of Wellington—the Great Duke—used to look in sometimes, and nothing pleased him better than that all the children should join hands and dance round him.

Bygones.

Most elderly people can remember something of public interest in their lives; some one time in which they came on the great stage of life, and were present at one of the

dramas that make epochs, even though it might be only as a super or an attendant. There was an old woman living in our village who had led as humdrum a life of country monotony, you would suppose, as any labourer's wife. Yet she could remember the coach decked with boughs and ribbons that brought the news of Waterloo to the village, on its way to the country town; she had once been in touch with the great events of the century when history was made. Another old lady, whom I knew as a child, a Frenchwoman living a quiet stagnant life in a seaport town, occupied with her cats and her garden, had as a girl of fifteen been forced to hide among the rocks, to save herself from being carried off to represent the goddess of Reason in one of the processions that took place at the time of the French Revolution. Nor is it only such very old people as these who have interesting recollections. A friend of mine was sitting next a placid middle-aged lady at dinner, and was complaining to her that he had somehow missed being present at any of the great events of modern times. 'I have been out of it all,' he said, 'and no doubt that has been the case with you.' She answered gravely: 'I was in India through the Mutiny.'

The Little Word 'If.'

There is an 'if' in every life. Most people can remember, when as boys or girls they bent over dull tasks on hot summer afternoons, how the drone of their companions' voices died away in their ears, how the words in the open book before them became a mist and an emptiness, and how a beautiful fairy 'if' came gliding down to visit them. And then they wandered off with this charmer, called 'If I were grown up,' killing lions in Africa; fighting (successfully, of course, or there would be no point to it) against tremendous odds; leading a forlorn hope; saving lives in a shipwreck or fire. Or if you were a girl you saw yourself

dancing at an ideal ball; or nursing the sick and wounded, like Miss Nightingale; or, it may be, you beheld yourself arrayed in white satin, the most delightful of brides, followed by a train of bridesmaids in pink (or was your favourite colour pale blue?) who envied and admired you. The bridegroom, of course, was merely a lay figure, about whom you did not trouble your head. Those were all very hopeful 'ifs' in those days. 'If only I were grown up!' we used to say then, just as now we sigh, 'if only I were young again!' For there is many a sad 'if' later on in life. 'If I might only see that dear face once more'; 'if I could only say one kind word'; 'if I could but bring the dear old times back again'; 'if only the dead could find out when to come back and be forgiven.' Poor vain words! For the grass is growing green above the sweet face that will never smile on us again; the opportunities for the kindly word or deed were lost long ago; the dear old times have departed; and no cries or sobs of ours can break the stillness of the dead who once waited so long in loving penitence, hoping to hear the sound of our voice, or the fall of our footstep, that they might learn from our lips that they were forgiven.

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